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JUST ANYONE

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Kitty telling her story.—*Page 6.*

J U S T A N Y O N E

OR

K I T T Y ' S D R E A M

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

MRS. G. S. REANEY

Author of 'Sunshine Jenny,' 'Sunbeam Willie,' etc.

LONDON

C. KEGAN PAUL & CO., 1 PATERNOSTER SQUARE

1879



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JUST ANYONE;

OR,

KITTY'S DREAM.

CHAPTER I.

UNDER THE UMBRELLA.

‘**A**ND do you really mean it’s true, Nancy? It’s just as if I can’t believe that the lady who lives in the beautiful house, with the lovely green blinds and the china flower-pots in the window, would let a poor little girl like me go to see her;’ and the face of the said poor little girl looked very wistful in its eager inquiry.

‘To be sure it’s every word of it true,’ replied her companion; ‘don’t I tell you I have been there myself, and it’s just as lovely as anything! I don’t think I have ever dreamt of anything half as beautiful—and I have my dreams, you know. Let’s see, now, if I can tell you what it’s like. Well, you know, you go

straight away up to the side door (it's not the back door where they take home the clothes that's been washed, but it's the same sort as the front door—a kind of young-lady door, as the front door is the mamma-door). Well, when you get to the door you don't have to stand a long time knocking, as Sarah Gibbs and me have to stand when we take home Mrs. Parson's washing of a Saturday, until our knuckles ache sometimes, and we're all shivering with the cold ; but almost before you get there, a kind-looking woman comes smiling out, and she says, "Well, my dears !" so softly, and then, "Come this way, little ones, the lady will be finely pleased to see you." Oh, but isn't it just nice to be *expected* anywhere like that ? Why, it seems as if we aren't poor little girls no longer, but little lady-girls, who always wear clean frocks and carry sunshades in summer time. If only it were a bit like that when we took home people's washing ! Why, what a treat we should have of Saturdays, instead of our having to dread it like ! But then—let's see, how far did I get ?

'You had just gone inside the door,' said little Kitty, who was listening with eyes, ears, and mouth.

'Oh yes, I remember,' continued Nancy. 'Well, then we followed the kind woman—she's the lady's *own servant*, I think ; she wore a beautiful white cap

and apron, and looked like a lady herself, with her smiling face—we followed her down a passage which was so clean that I couldn't help feeling to long to give our kitchen a scrub for poor mother when I got home. And then we came to a large room, which had lots of chairs in it, and a looking-glass, and I don't know how many pictures and texts.'

'Oh my!' said little Kitty under her breath, as Nancy paused a moment.

'Yes! and I'll tell you what one of the texts was about,' said Nancy, lowering her voice a little, 'I spelt it out as the lady talked about it. It was, GOD IS LOVE. And oh! but the lady did say such beautiful things about it. She asked us if we didn't love the babies she'd seen us nursing sometimes for our mothers? If we didn't try to take care of them and keep them from getting run over? And then she says—and oh! how she smiled—that's a bit like the way God loves *you*. He wants to take care of you, to hold you in His arms so that the naughty spirit can't get you. And then she talked about the Lord Jesus, how He's just everywhere, loving all of us poor little girls, and wanting us to tell no lies, but to think of Him when we're playing, so that we don't get angry, and when our fathers and mothers aren't *kind to us*, so that we're not saucy and impatient.'

Oh, Kitty, I can't tell you *half*—it was so beautiful! and seemed to send one off to sleep like, though you were as wide as wide-a-wake every minute of the time. It was, you know, like being rested when your bones ached with being tired. You see what I mean, rested *here*,—and Nancy put her hand upon her heart, and nodded her head significantly at Kitty.

'Say the text again, please,' said little Kitty gently; 'it sounded so pretty and soft.'

'GOD IS LOVE,' repeated Nancy solemnly; then she added briskly, 'I'll tell you what I've been doing ever since Sunday. I've been finding those letters out in the streets, and you can't think how nice it is! Look! this is how I do it. I go to Gun Court for my G, and then I run on to Oxford Lane for an O. I get my D from Dartmouth Row, and go round the corner to Isaac's Turning for my I. I haven't no trouble to find half-a-dozen S's—there's Smith's Alley, Salter's Buildings, and a lot besides—and the other letters come pretty easy, but I'm nearly heart-broken about the V in LOVE. It gives me a deal of trouble. There's only one place I have found yet where I can get it, and that is at the "Victoria's Head," that public-house at the—'

'Oh! you needn't tell me where the "Victoria Head" is,' said little Kitty with a shudder. 'We

lived alongside of it once, and it's there poor father still goes.' And Kitty's face looked inexpressibly sad.'

The two children, Nancy Twyfield and Kitty Woking, were sitting together on a doorstep of a somewhat dark and dingy court in one of our largest southern towns of England. They had sat thus for more than an hour, under cover of a large, though rather tattered, umbrella. The house, upon the doorstep of which they sat, was at the far end of the court, and this might account for the fact of their being left undisturbed for so long a time. The children of other homes were playing about, but at a little distance from Nancy and Kitty, who were completely screened from view by the umbrella. The rain was coming down in a gentle drizzle, but the children took no notice of it from under their shelter. They had been talking as little ones are wont to talk, telling, possibly for the twentieth time, something in connection with their life's history which lay very near their heart.

Little Kitty had once been right away into the country to visit an aunt. For six delightful weeks the town child had revelled in buttercups and daisies, the singing of the birds, and the smell of new mown hay. It was three years ago, at least, but Kitty loved *to talk of it*, and each time she spoke about it, it all

came fresh to her memory. Scarcely a child in the court but had heard the story of little Kitty's visit to her aunt. To-day, Kitty had told her story under the umbrella to Nancy, a little girl from a neighbouring court. It was after this that Nancy told her tale about *her* visit to the lady's house ; and when Kitty had, with childlike excitement and delight, exclaimed, 'Wouldn't I like to have been you !' Nancy had replied by giving her an invitation to accompany her on the following Sunday. The 'good lady' had urged upon her little pupils that each might bring a little friend the next time she came. Nancy had been all the week wondering whom she could take, as it had to be a little girl who went to no other Sunday or ragged school. The talk under the umbrella with Kitty settled the question. 'Of course Kitty would be just the right little girl to go.'

For some time longer the two children continued to talk, then the woman coming home, upon the doorstep of whose house they had been sitting, they had to move to let her pass, and in a few moments they were in the midst of the little people at the other end of the court, playing at 'Here we go round the mulberry bush.' By-and-by a message came for Nancy, her mother wanted her, she must go at once. Nancy drew Kitty on one side,—

'Don't forget to come to my house to-morrow afternoon, Kitty,' she said, in an important whisper; 'the lady told us to be early, so we'll start when St. Jude's strikes two, it'll give us an hour, and if we're too soon—you know we *could* get there in ten minutes—we'll sit on a doorstep for a bit and tell tales.'

'And where is it you be going to?' said a voice at Nancy's elbow, proceeding from a woman neither child had noticed. She was leaning out of her window just at the back of them, her chin resting upon her hands.

Nancy coloured up and said hurriedly, 'It's to a lady's house, please.'

'Indeed,' said the woman, in a mocking tone, 'a *lady's* house! You silly little girls, as if a *lady* would let dirty little street children go to her house! You had better wait until you get some decent clothing to go in!' and she laughed unkindly.

Poor little Kitty burst into tears, but Nancy spoke up reassuringly.

'Don't cry, Kitty, it's all right; the lady told us she thought more of our hearts than our clothes; we weren't to mind our shabby frocks, but we were just to have our flesh as clean as we could.' And then Nancy added in a whisper, drawing Kitty on one

side, so that they might be beyond the hearing of the woman who had interrupted them,—

‘You come a bit sooner than the time for starting, and we’ll have a wash at our pump, to be sure our hands and face *are* clean.’ And with a nod which gave much confidence to little Kitty, Nancy ran off to see what her mother wanted her for.

CHAPTER II.

KITTY'S HOME.

LITTLE Kitty did not return to her play when Nancy left her, but went quietly into a house some halfway down the court.

A delicate-looking woman, with a long sorrowful face, sat on a stool by the half empty grate sewing. A babe of only a few weeks old lay across her knee. This was Kitty's mother, and her only other surviving child, Kitty's little brother.

Mrs. Woking looked up as her little daughter entered. In spite of her very sorrowful face, she had *a smile always ready* for Kitty. ‘The home was

dark and desolate enough,' she would say sometimes, 'without her making it worse by being always gloomy when the children came about her.'

'Well, Kitty, where have you been to, child?' said Mrs. Woking, in a gentle voice; 'you have not got wet, I hope? Ah! I see you have had our old umbrella out. Well, you may as well nurse baby a bit for me now you have come in, and I'll get father's tea ready in case he may come home for it;' and Mrs. Woking put the baby in Kitty's arms.

Kitty began to hum to her little brother. She enjoyed nursing him; she had nursed other of her mother's babies, before 'they took ill and died.' Child as she was—now only seven years old—she wondered if baby would go too as soon as he began to cut his teeth, or whether he would live to grow up to be a man like father. Then Kitty thought a new thought. Those beautiful words which Nancy had told her about God's love suggesting it,—'Perhaps because God loved little children He took them right away, before they got grown up, for fear they should be—like father was.'

Alas! when little minds are troubled rather than made happy with the thought of 'father's life.' Alas! when little hearts bear sorrowful memories about the *one who should* be the home's sunshine, the wife's

stay, the children's bright example. Little Kitty pondered the thought in silence ; her mother was busy moving about the kitchen. Instinctively she drew baby closer to her. Already she loved him deeply, tenderly. How could she ever see him taken away as the others had been ? And yet, if it did mean to live and grow like father—it would be best to spare him. Kitty felt a lump come in her throat as she decided this, and she began to kiss baby a little too warmly for that young man's comfort. A baby cry brought Mrs. Woking to Kitty's side.

‘Come, child, don't be too rough with the darling ; he's only little limbs at present, and wants tender handling. Just walk him about a bit ; or see—’

Mrs. Woking had stopped suddenly, having caught sight of something outside the window.

‘Run, Kitty,’ she continued hurriedly, ‘run up with baby to Mrs. Wotton's attic. Ask her to take you in a while ; your father's coming home, and not himself, I see.’

Already there were noises in the court too familiar to Kitty to need explanation. She knew her father had been drinking, and was returning home angry *and quarrelsome*. She sped upstairs with a haste *which might have been dangerous to baby's welfare.*

But Mrs. Wotton (the attic lodger) anticipated her coming, and ran down to meet her. In a few moments sorrowful sounds came from below. Kitty heard her father's voice in loud, angry tones, then ever and anon her mother's voice in earnest pleading. The little girl was trembling in every limb. She knew too well what it all meant. Her father was insisting that the mother should give up something—her dress, her wedding ring, or perhaps something belonging to little Kitty or baby—to pawn for drink, and Mrs. Woking was refusing while pleading to be spared the threatened blows.

Poor little Kitty stopped up her ears, and sobbed passionately. Mrs. Wotton tried to pacify her, and soon, finding the noise downstairs increase rather than abate, she undressed the little girl and put her into her own bed. It was not long before the child, worn out with her weeping, and sick with fright, fell fast asleep. They did not wake her when an hour afterwards a woman came up to the attic to ask Mrs. Wotton to take baby down to its mother. That night the neighbours watched, in hushed silence, beside Mrs. Woking's bed. A doctor had been called in; he said she was suffering from a nervous shock, caused by a fall, the fall the result of a blow she had *received from a hand which, but for the drink, was*

ever ready to work for her, was ever eager to shelter her from harm.

The next morning, Little Kitty kissed Mrs. Woking's pale cheek with tearful tenderness, when, upon softly creeping into the room, she found her mother propped up by pillows, too weak to rise.

'Oh, mother, but it *is* hard !' sobbed Kitty under her breath, burying her face in the pillow.

'Hush, darling,' whispered Mrs. Woking softly. 'Poor father didn't mean to hurt me. Leave off crying, dear, or you will wake him, and I want him to sleep on awhile—until,' she added, with a feeble smile, 'I get a bit *môre* round.'

That morning Kitty never left her mother's side. When St. Jude's church clock, the chimes of which could be distinctly heard in Kitty's home, struck two, the child remembered her promise to Nancy. She told her mother hurriedly all about her invitation to the 'good lady's' house, and gained her ready consent to go. So, with a kiss to baby, and telling Mrs. Wotton in the attic that she was going out, Kitty ran hastily round to the court in which Nancy lived. She had been too much absorbed in her mother's sorrow, and too fearful of any movement which might wake her *father*, to venture to do much in tidying herself. She *was quite ready for a wash* at the pump with Nancy,

and took great pains to smooth her hair down straight with water.

In spite of Kitty's sad home she was a very happy little girl as she trudged along with Nancy to the lady's house. They had quite three-quarters of an hour before them in which to perform ten minutes' walk, but more than once they stopped to see the children throng into a Sunday school, and so the time quickly passed, and a little before three o'clock they found themselves at the lady's house.

At first Kitty could only gaze around her in wondering delight. The lady had come up to speak to Nancy, and upon seeing Kitty had said gently, 'And this is your little friend? Well, darling, I am *very* glad to see you here to-day.' She had then passed on to others—many little girls were gathering in—but Kitty thought if nothing else happened the memory of that smile, the thought of those gentle words, would make her glad for many a day.

But much more *did* happen. When the room was nearly full, the lady asked them all to stand and sing a hymn with her. Then she read out the lines, and they all sang—

'Around the throne of God in heaven,
Thousands of children stand;
Children whose sins are all forgiven,
A holy, happy band,
Singing glory, glory, glory.'

Kitty was not slow to catch the chorus, and her voice rose with the others in the 'glory, glory, glory!'

Then the lady asked them all to kneel down while she prayed, and Kitty listened with awe to the words :—

'O Thou great and good God, look down upon these little children who come to Thee to ask Thee to make them good. Their souls are covered with the stains of sin, they are helpless and weak to do right. Please wash all their sins away, and, having made their souls ready, please let Thy Holy Spirit come and live in them. Teach them about Thy love. Let them understand it was because Thou didst love them that Thou gavest Thy Son Jesus Christ to die upon the cross for them. Oh may they love gentle Jesus for His love to them. May they long for His sake always to be good, never to say or do naughty things, and every day to pray in their hearts to be kept from the power of sin and Satan. Let these dear children live in Thy presence, feeling Thee near to them in their homes, at play, or whatever is happening, so shall they always want to do what is right and pleasing to Thee, though it costs them much and *makes them suffer*, and so shall they be getting ready *for their home* in heaven with Thee and with the

Lord Jesus Christ. Hear us all, and bless us to-day, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.'

When Kitty rose from her knees her eyes were moist with tears. She listened eagerly to the lady's words, as, having read a few verses from the Bible, she talked to them about God and heaven.

'God wants every little girl here to be happy,' she said tenderly, and no little girl can possibly be happy so long as her heart is full of naughty thoughts and feelings. What can be done? Our Bibles tell us. "Wash you, make you clean," it says. But what *can* wash sin away? Now listen, and I will tell you. God gave His own dear Son to die for every one who was sinful. He gave His life to save poor sinners—and all who have sin about them are sinners—from dying. If you come with your sin-stained souls to God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and ask *Him* to wash you and make you clean, He can do it, for He has no sin about Him, and He can take all yours away. Now what little girl here to-day *can* refuse to come to Him? You want to be good, to feel always ready to do good things, instead of doing naughty things? You want one day when you have grown old, or perhaps while you are still young, whenever death comes to take you away from this world, you want to go to heaven, now do you not? Well, the Lord

Jesus wants it even more than *you* do, for He knows much more than *you* do the terrible misery and death which await all who are not good. So see, He calls you to come to Himself ; and the little thought you have in your heart, " Oh, I *would* so like to go," is just an answer to His call. So run to Him, little ones, do not wait another day. He is here calling you each by name, and saying, " Come." "

Kitty's eyes were resting upon the lady's face. She drew her breath as the lady paused, then she asked shyly,—

' Please, ma'am, may *anyone* go to Jesus ? '

' Yes, dear child,' replied the lady, ' just anyone.'

That evening the last words little Kitty thought about as she crept into her bed in the corner of her mother's room were these, ' Just anyone may come to Jesus.'



CHAPTER III.

SLEEPING AND WAKING.

AND Kitty dreamt she was in the country, far away out of the smoke and noise of the town. The buttercups and daisies were all around her. The birds were singing. The sun was shining, and little boys and girls were playing about. Every one seemed happy. No one grew angry at their play. No one said an unkind word. Suddenly little Kitty trembled as she heard a bitter, moaning cry. She tried to stop her ears, but the sound *would* come. At last she could bear it no longer. She ran to a ditch some little distance off, from whence the sound seemed to come, and, stooping down, she saw her father lying there. She put out her hand to help him to rise, while he continued to moan, and cry, 'I'm a lost man! I'm a lost man!'

'Take Kitty's hand, father,' said the little girl; 'I'll pull you up if you hold fast to me.' And then she saw that she was too little to help her father up, and she broke into a fit of passionate weeping, for suddenly she felt to love her father so, so dearly, and to *long to save him.*

He continued to moan, and to implore her to seek help, he would die if left there. Then Kitty thought of the kind lady, and then she wondered if this lovely country with the flowers and birds and sunshine could be heaven. And she remembered the lady's words about the gentle Saviour who could alone put away sin out of people's hearts, and how she had said that 'just anyone' might come to Jesus. And this made little Kitty glad, for if anyone might come, might not 'father?' So she said softly to her father—

'Don't cry, father; you are not quite lost; the good lady knows how you may be washed quite clean from your sins, and be made fit for heaven. She told us all about it. I'll go and ask her to come and tell you herself.'

'Go quickly, child,' said Kitty's father imploringly; 'don't lose a moment, or I may die here, and then it will be too late; run, Kitty, run.'

Then Kitty stood up and looked round her. It was very dark where her father lay, but all around her and about her the sunshine came, and at first it seemed to prevent her from seeing anything far off. But gradually as her eyes grew more accustomed to the light, she saw, standing some little distance away, *the 'Good Lady.'* With a heart-bound of joy Kitty *ran to her.*

'Oh, lady, lady!' she exclaimed breathlessly, 'father! poor father!—lady, *do* come.'

'Indeed I will,' said the good lady, taking Kitty's hand; 'you take me to him.'

'Please let us run,' said Kitty excitedly. 'He wants you so very, *very* badly. He wants to come to the Saviour Jesus, and he doesn't know the way.'

Then Kitty and the lady started off running, and they were just getting near to the ditch in which the poor man lay when Kitty's foot knocked up against a stone, and—she awoke!

It was quite dark as Kitty, sitting up in bed, tried to collect her thoughts and learn what had really happened. It was some few moments before she could make out anything clearly; then she gathered that her mother and father were asleep; but that it was still early in the night she felt quite sure, as she could hear the people talking in the room above, and they were seldom up later than half-past nine. Kitty slipped out of bed and dressed herself. She was still trembling with the excitement of her dream, and with that intensity of purpose peculiar to one just awoke from sleep, who, though awake, is still half dreaming, she determined she would go at once to ask the 'Good Lady' to come to her father. No one noticed her as *she felt the house*. The doors of many in that court

were fastened up for the night, while others stood ajar, awaiting the return of some member of the family.

Speeding away with all the haste possible, Kitty soon reached the lady's house. Her heart bounded as she saw lights streaming forth from every window.

'She's not gone to bed yet,' said Kitty to herself; 'perhaps she's had a dream too—great folks do have sleeps, they say, sitting by the fire in their arm-chairs—and perhaps she's just waiting for me to come and fetch her to poor father; she couldn't know the way unless some one showed her.'

At that moment the clock of a neighbouring church began to strike. Kitty stood still and counted the strokes. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—ten struck; then, as the last stroke died away, Kitty drew a deep breath and went on again. She was wondering at which door she should knock. Perhaps it would be right to go to the 'young-lady door,' as Nancy had called the side entrance, or perhaps it would be better to go round to the back. At that moment Kitty heard voices behind her, and, pausing to let the people pass, she found that one of the two who were speaking was the kind woman who *welcomed them* that afternoon at the lady's side *door, and whose white cap and apron she had so much*

admired. They were turning in towards the side entrance when Kitty summoned courage to speak.

‘Please, ma’am,’ said the little girl timidly, ‘may I see the lady?’

‘What are you doing out in the streets at this time of night?’ asked the one whom Kitty addressed. ‘Little girls should be in bed and fast asleep at this hour.’ This was said not unkindly but firmly, and for a moment Kitty’s courage almost failed her. But remembering with agony the scene in her dream, and still almost convinced that it had all ‘really and truly happened,’ Kitty said eagerly,—

‘Oh, please, let me see the lady just for one minute. It’s something very particular, and I daren’t wait until morning.’

Mrs. Finney—the lady’s housekeeper—had strict orders never to deny her mistress to anyone, and she was too much accustomed to people coming at a late hour in cases of emergency, to be altogether surprised at little Kitty’s importunity. She bade the child follow her, and soon Kitty found herself in the same room in which the lady had spoken to them all that afternoon. Kitty stood a little tremblingly and nervous while waiting for the lady to come to her. She had had no fear while in the street; although night, the *gaslight* prevented positive darkness, and num-

bers were moving about as in the daytime ; and Kitty had been too much wrapped up in thought about her dream to have time to grow fearful in regard to being out at so late an hour. But here, in this schoolroom, other thoughts came to her,—‘Would the lady be angry?’ ‘Would she scold her for coming, and forbid her ever to come near the house again?’

Poor little Kitty was each moment becoming more frightened at her own presumption, when the door opened and the lady entered.

‘Well, little girl,’ said Mrs. Unwin kindly, taking Kitty’s hand and drawing her to herself as she sat down on the nearest chair, ‘and what do you want me to do for you?’

‘To come and see father, please, ma’am,’ said Kitty briefly.

‘Is he ill, dear?’ asked Mrs. Unwin tenderly.

‘Oh, ma’am, it’s not that, but he’s so wicked, and he’s made poor mother so bad by beating her, and he’s no one to tell him the way to heaven, and, he’s all covered with sin, he is—oh! oh! do, *do* come!’

Here Kitty fairly broke down, and sobbed as if her little heart would break.

‘There, darling, do not cry,’ said Mrs. Unwin *soothingly*, ‘but try and tell me why you came just

now about this. Could you not have come earlier in the evening?’

‘It’s because I dreamt you would help poor father,’ said Kitty between her sobs. ‘He lay in a ditch so cold and sad; he said he was lost, and I told him he could get his sins washed away, so as he might go to heaven, if he’d only ask God. He thought he was too bad; but you told us just anyone might go, so I told him that, and he asked me to run quick and fetch you. Oh, please, ma’am, *do* come; he might be dead if we waited too long.’

Mrs. Unwin saw that Kitty was labouring under some strong excitement. At present she could scarcely tell from Kitty’s story what was really true and what was only a dream. She thought she would make one more effort to get at the truth as it existed.

‘You say your father is not ill, Kitty?’ she said quietly.

‘No, ma’am,’ replied Kitty, ‘and he isn’t drunk, for he’s stayed at home all to-day, because he’s so sorry for making mother so bad last night. Oh, please, *do* come now; he may be off on the drink again to-morrow.’

Mrs. Unwin hesitated. Some short time ago she had been led to yearn to work for the Lord and Master whom she loved, amongst the ‘little ones’

who seemed like 'lambs without a shepherd,' in the courts and alleys which lay so near to her own bright home. With this yearning had come the prayer, 'Lord guide me into the right path of work, and let my footsteps never falter when Thou bidst me go.' She had visited the courts and alleys in the *daytime*, but never before at night. She dreaded encountering the darkness, both without and within those desolate homes at night. But hitherto no special call had come to her to venture there after sunset. Now there seemed a voice pleading with Kitty's voice, '*Do come.*' There seemed a look within Kitty's earnest gaze which besought compliance. Could she not feel that One other stood there besides little Kitty, One whose words at that moment came fresh to mind, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these . . . ye have done it unto Me'?

Mrs. Unwin rose from her seat, took from a peg on the door a long cloak and hood, which she had supplied herself with for visiting purposes among the sick, and then telling Kitty she would lose no time in going to see her father, she dressed herself, made known her departure to her servants, and left the house holding the hand of her little guide.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE DAWN.

LITTLE Kitty had slipped out of the house unobserved when she hurried off to see Mrs. Unwin ; but some one passed her in the street who thought it strange for her to be out at that hour unless something was wrong—her mother or the baby ill. This was Mrs. Brown, who lived next door but one to the Wokings. Little Kitty was in such a hurry or she would have stopped her. Hastening to her own home she inquired if anyone knew what was amiss with the Wokings, and finding no one had heard how Mrs. Woking was since the morning—Mrs. Brown had been spending the day with a sick friend—she determined to go in and make some inquiries for herself.

There was a light in the attic windows, but everywhere else in the Wokings' house the rooms appeared to be closed for the night. Mrs. Brown's knock at the door was answered by Mrs. Wotton, the attic lodger.

'Anything amiss with Mrs. Woking, to-night? I saw Kitty *running* down Gatwell Street as I came

home, she seemed in such a hurry or I would have stopped the child,' said Mrs. Brown, in a low whisper, a look of genuine anxiety upon her good-natured face.

'Oh, you're mistaken, Mrs. Brown,' said Mrs. Wotton, quietly, but decidedly; 'they have all been in bed and asleep this hour or more past. Kitty went early, for I looked in about nine o'clock and heard her breathing pretty heavily. I took her mother a sup of tea from my own teapot. Eh! but my heart aches for the poor creature. I knew her when she was as blooming a lassie as ever stepped foot in a church. She sang in our village choir, and, I don't scorn to own it, I've been envious in my time of her pretty face and sweet manners. She never ought to have married Woking. He wasn't *half* good enough for her, and yet when the man's sober he is right enough.'

'Yes, and show me the husband as isn't?' said Mrs. Brown, emphatically. 'I don't believe in the badness of folks if left to themselves. It's the drink that is bad, and your husband with drink in him is no more your husband with drink out of him than a London court is like a village lane where the violets and meadow-sweet grow, and where you walk with the scent of clover and new mown hay all about you *each step you take!*'

‘But,’ resumed Mrs. Brown, after a moment’s pause, ‘I’m not convinced yet about little Kitty. I shouldn’t like any harm to come to the child. Just satisfy my curiosity now, and *see* if she *is* in her bed. You needn’t disturb anybody.’

Mrs. Wotton disappeared upstairs with a laugh at the ‘difficulty of convincing *some* folks,’ but she very quickly came running down again. Mrs. Woking was awake, and had just discovered Kitty to be missing. From that moment every one in the house was made most anxious about little Kitty’s disappearance. Woking himself got up and put on his clothes, prepared to go out and search for the child. Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Wotton had already started. He felt ‘persuaded in his own mind that she was walking in her sleep, and that some one would be sure to find her and bring her back.’

Poor Mrs. Woking sat up in bed with a shawl thrown over her shoulders. She felt weak and faint, not having yet recovered from her blows of the previous night, and her husband hesitated to leave her by herself. (Ah, when sober, how he loved his gentle wife !)

‘Don’t fret, Polly, it is sure to come all right,’ he was saying tenderly as the door opened, and Kitty *entered*, followed by Mrs. Unwin.

Kitty, quite unconscious of the anxiety she had caused, ran up to her mother with a face brilliant with delight.

'The lady's come, mother!' she exclaimed. 'Father's not had beer to-night, so he'll be sure to listen. Oh, father,' she continued, as she turned and kissed him hastily, 'you won't be lost now ; the lady knows the way to heaven, and you will learn all about it, won't you father, so that we can everyone of us go there ? Mother and baby and me would be very lonely-like if we got there and you were kept outside !' and as little Kitty thought of her dream she shuddered.

Mr. Woking remained quite silent. Little Kitty's words touched him. He passed his hand over his eyes somewhat roughly, as if to brush away a tear he did not care to be seen, then he said in an unsteady voice—

'Indeed your poor father would find it hard to learn the road to heaven, child, he's too far started in a contrary direction.'

'No,' said Mrs. Unwin softly, 'what you say is not true, my friend, while in our Bible we have the promise, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." It is only a question of coming—of having the desire to find pardon with God. Tell me, *have you no wish to do better ?*'

'Ay, ay,' said Mr. Woking, much affected, 'and it does seem as if the Lord took special notice of my wish, for it's all to-day that I've been crying silently from my heart,—O God, send some one to me as will talk a bit to me for my good! You know I had a beloved mother once, ma'am. She went to her grave thinking, poor soul, that her teaching and prayers for me were all lost, but that's yet to be proved. Oh, ma'am, since you have spoken Bible words to me, would you put up a bit of a prayer that I may be able to keep the resolutions I've been making to myself to-day? Surely you have come to us as an angel from heaven. I've never breathed a thought about my resolves to anyone to-day, and yet your coming seems to be as if some one knew all about it, and had sent you.' And Mr. Woking looked full into his wife's face, as if to read there some secret as to the cause of Mrs. Unwin's unexpected visit.

'See, let me sit down,' said Mrs. Unwin smiling—she had been standing all this time, with her hand holding the door a little open—'and Kitty shall tell you a dream she had to-night, which will account for my coming at this late hour. The little woman thought there was no time to lose, and I think she was right.'

Kitty had by this time found a place close beside

her mother on the bed. She was a little shy to tell her dream at first, but yielded upon being pressed, and very solemnly the words fell upon the father's ear.

'You know, father,' Kitty said in the middle of her story, 'it was all so beautiful and happy-like until I heard you moan, and then I seemed to feel as if I could never be happy any more, it was such a dreadful cry you gave. You thought you were lost, you know, father, that you never could get out of that dark ditch ; but when I told you about the lady, you said, "Run, run Kitty! run quick and fetch her to me." When I woke up, I was just forced to go, my dream seemed all so real.'

Mrs. Unwin sank upon her knees as Kitty paused, and prayed earnestly for God's blessing upon that little household, for God's grace to change their hearts. When she rose from her knees, she looked Woking steadily in the face, and said,—

'Is there any special sin, dear friend, which you know has hitherto kept you from seeking God? If you know of one, promise, I beseech you, to-night, as in God's presence, to give it up, by the help of His Son Jesus Christ.'

'Let the wife speak as to that,' said Woking tearfully. 'See,' he said, turning up the sleeve of her *night-dress* and exposing to view her bruised and

swollen arm—‘see, that speaks for itself;’ and he sobbed silently.

‘Nay, John, lad,’ said Mrs. Woking tenderly, ‘don’t take on about it. It’s all forgiven hours ago. It was not *you* as did it. Nay, dear, you’re the best of husbands when you’re yourself. Only keep *yourself*, John, and there will be no more blows.’

Woking turned to Mrs. Unwin,—

‘None know,’ he said quietly, ‘the desperate hold our sins get of us but those that feel their power. Oh, ma’am, if only I could get rid of my love of drink!—if only I could!’

‘Nothing is too hard for God to do,’ said Mrs. Unwin, ‘if every hour you seek His help you *must* conquer, because, and only because, He will fight your battles, meet your difficulties, overcome your temptations. He will do *in you* what you by yourself could never accomplish.’

Mrs. Unwin remained for some time talking earnestly to Kitty’s father. At length she wished them all ‘good-night,’ and left, warmly thanked for her visit.



CHAPTER V.

THE SOUGHT ONE SEEKING.

‘**W**HO could believe it? Why, there’s John Woking taken to preaching! He’s kept his religion pretty quiet for the last three years, and now he has commenced talking in earnest. Well, curiosity will take a fellow to hear him if nothing else will.’

The speaker was Nancy’s father, an industrious man, who never gave way to excess in drinking (excepting on some very special occasion—twice or thrice in the twelve months), but who was known by all his neighbours to be a very irreligious man, one who considered churches and chapels were built for women and children, but that it should not be expected for men, who were, or ought to be, the bread-winners of the family, to take up their day of rest by attending religious services.

These were the opinions of the man who sauntered down the court with a short clay pipe in his mouth, purporting to stand within earshot of the man who *was* preaching at a street corner near.

John Woking took for his text that day, ‘The Son

of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost ;' and he began by saying,—

'Once I was one of the lost, but He sought and found me. And how do you think He did it? One Sunday I was full of remorse for my unkind conduct on the Saturday previous to my good, faithful wife. I was torn in sunder with unhappy thoughts. Thinks I, this will never do. Talk about "the pleasures of sin," why, I've never known them anything but bitter, bitter sorrows. Yet what am I to do? How can I give up my old life and start afresh? Well, the moment that question came I began to pray in my heart, "O God, send some one to talk to me for my good." Well, friends, perhaps that was the very first step that I took towards the new life I had been longing for. That prayer has always seemed to be the turning point of my life ; and let me beg of you, if you are longing in your minds, you just turn to and *pray*.

'God heard my cry, and *sent* some one to show me the way to heaven. If I was in earnest to be sorry for what was gone by, I was to be in earnest to give up what I knew I couldn't ask God's blessing upon. Well, I couldn't ask His blessing upon my Sabbath breaking, nor upon my drinking and swearing, and such like, so it was one of two things I must give up, *being in earnest to start afresh, or I must give up bad*

habits. I made up my mind I would give up the bad habits.'

'I don't say but what it cost me a big struggle. Many a night I had to get my little girl Kitty to come to me at the factory gate to walk home with me, so that I might get safely by the public houses. Ah, you'll say, "What a weak fellow to be sure!" Well, so I was, but *I knew it*. Now many a man's weak who *doesn't* know it, and that's the reason why he never guards his weak points because he doesn't think he has any.

'Well, I so far turned over a new leaf (as most of you know by what happened), but I'll tell you what, I had still a big weight on my heart. I had been seeking to save my body, but had forgotten about my soul. Now, listen ; a changed life doesn't always grow out of a changed heart, but unless the heart's changed—the heart that loves sin turned out, and the heart that *can* love God and good thoughts and ways taken in—there can be no peace to one's conscience. I began to see the horribleness of sin, and I wanted to get sin put quite away from me, and I tried to puzzle it all out to myself how it could be done. And my little girl said the very words one Sunday when she came home from her Sunday-school *class*. (*Thank God for our Sunday schools !*) She *told me a text she had learnt* :—

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

“*Whosoever*,” said I, to myself, “whosoever—who does that really mean?”

“Why *just anyone*, father,” said my little Kitty; “you and me, and mother and baby, and everyone.”

‘Now, my dear friends,’ said Woking, suddenly changing his voice, and becoming very earnest, ‘That’s the pith of all religion; it’s *just anyone* who may go to God and plead the merits of His Son who died. None need be afraid to go, no one need stay away; but, mark you, *go you must* if you would be saved. Now I’ve got a text here to-day for all of you, and it’s this, “Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.”

‘Do you want to get your conscience unburdened? Do you want to have that load of sin lifted off your heart? Do you want to feel that light-hearted and glad every hour of the day that you don’t mind what happens, you feel like a little child led everywhere by a Father who loves you as “the apple of His eye,” and who is always mindful for your good? You may get all this by coming to the Lord Jesus Christ, and just believing in Him as your Saviour. And one other thing. Do you want to get rid of bad habits? Do you

want to give up the drink that may be sapping all the manhood and womanhood out of you? Do you want to leave off saying things that are untrue or impure? Come to the Lord Jesus, He shall save you *from* your sins. It was my little girl that first cared for my soul; it was some one else's little girl—little Nancy, that died last spring-time twelvemonths—that took my little woman where she heard of the good Lord Jesus. And now that I've kept quiet till I can't hold silence any longer, I've just got up this morning to carry on the message I had brought to me. Heaven's open for just anyone as wants to come. You can't get there with sin all about you, so you just go to the cross, where Jesus died for sinners, to get sin washed right out of you in His blood; then, washed and forgiven, you set your face heavenwards, and remember the Lord Jesus every moment of your lives, so are you saved from your sins. Come now let us sing a hymn together,' and Woking started in strong, vigorous tones the hymn beginning—

'We're travelling home to heaven above;
Will you go? Will you go?
To sing the Saviour's dying love;
Will you go? Will you go?
Millions have reached that blissful shore;
Their toils and labours all are o'er,
And yet there's room for millions more;
Will you go? Will you go?'

One man at least in the crowd which gathered about John Woking that morning was deeply moved, The speaker had touched a chord in his heart which continued to vibrate long after he was silent. Little Nancy's father was not likely to forget his child, whom he had loved as fully as a nature so apparently hard and selfish was capable of loving. Perhaps had Nancy lived he would ere now have desired more earnestly after a 'better life,' for the child's gentleness and goodness since attending Mrs. Unwin's afternoon classes had not been unnoticed by her father. But a very short illness, during the greater part of which time Nancy was delirious, terminating in her death, Mr. Twyfield grew embittered rather than softened, sullen, and morose, rather than submissive and yielding.

Until to-day he had not hesitated to scoff at even Woking's religion, although he was quite conscious how great a change it had made in his outward life. But now, standing this morning at a distance, his hat shading his eyes, a conviction seized him, which was no other than this, that there seemed to be life and reality in what Woking said, and 'if what he said were true, all the scoffing in the world would not make it *untrue*.'

Twyfield crept away before the meeting broke up.

That night he walked round to Woking's house, and asked him to prove to him that what he had that morning preached could be verified by the Bible. And as the shadows of evening gathered in that city court, two men, the one once drunkard and wife-beater, the other the scoffer, sat side by side reading God's word. Woking had, in the three years since his conversion—his turning round from walking away from God to stepping forward on the narrow road towards heaven—studied the Bible well, and many were the passages marked.

It was sitting thus that Mrs. Unwin found them when she looked in on her way home from church.

'Well, Woking !' she exclaimed, 'you have a very happy face to-night. Are you showing your friend there where you get your joy from, for I see you have the Bible before you ?'

'I'm paying a debt I've long owed,' said Mr. Woking with emotion. 'It was this man's little girl which first led my Kitty to your meeting, and—you know the rest.'

Mrs. Unwin's eyes filled with tears. 'Let me tell you,' she said gently, 'how it was I came to have a class of little girls on the Sunday afternoon. Once I had a little daughter, fair and full of the beauty of another *and a better world than this*. It was my great desire

to take all care of her—she was my only one. I devoted all my time to her. I would not leave her on the Sunday to take part in any Sunday-school work. We would sit together and read ‘Bible stories,’ and talk of heaven. One night my little girl was ill, the next day fever set in. I was in deepest sorrow. I watched beside her for some weeks, now hoping she would be spared to us, now fearing she would be taken away. She had two relapses, and at length she sank from exhaustion.

‘The night she died, she called me to her, and, putting her little hands in mine, she looked up into my face and whispered softly, pausing between each word,—

“Mamma, darling, when I go home to heaven you will have *lots* of time to spare, and will you not on Sundays tell other little girls the Bible stories as you have told me? I wish you would tell those little girls who sit upon the door-steps as we pass down the street—the little girls who nurse the babies.”

“Why those little ones especially, my darling?” I asked, trying to keep back my tears.

“Because,” she answered sweetly, “they look as if they want to have some glad thoughts of heaven to make them happy *now*. And then,” she added, “if you tell them, they can go and tell their mothers.”

'My little daughter's words were to me as the voice of God,' said Mrs. Unwin. 'For months after her death my health was too broken to undertake a Sunday-school class, and one day the thought came to me that instead of waiting to get quite strong before I began my work, I would invite one or two little ones to my own home. I began with three, and now I have, notwithstanding the numbers I have drafted off into Sunday schools, fifty little scholars, and in teaching them of the Saviour's love, I can never forget what my little girl hoped might be the result of anything they learnt—that they would tell their mothers.'

'Ay, and their fathers, too, ma'am,' said Woking, wiping his eyes. 'No one knows the work they are doing when they fill a child's heart with thoughts of God. Talk about missionaries, why, each little child taught in the Sunday school, or in ladies' homes like yours, ma'am, or by a word in the street even, is a little missionary in her home! There's nothing lost that's rightly put into a child's heart. My Kitty loves the sight of our old umbrella, because it was under that that Nancy first spoke of you and of your kindness to little girls. And that reminds me, ma'am, I've often had it in my mind to tell you—since Kitty *told me—how* Nancy loved to spell out GOD IS LOVE,

by the first letter of the streets and courts round here. She was full of trouble about V, because the only place where she could get that was—my old haunt, the “Victoria Head.” Now I’ve been thinking, couldn’t something be done some day to get a room where we might meet in winter-time and have a bit of schooling together in reading God’s Word? And couldn’t we just name it something beginning with a V?’

Mrs. Unwin’s face brightened, but before she could speak, Twyfield said abruptly—

‘Do you know that yonder “Victoria Head” is shut up? It’s had its licence taken away. It’s a biggish place, if it could be had for the purpose you speak about.’

‘A grand idea!’ said Mrs. Unwin enthusiastically; ‘if only we could get it and do as it has been done elsewhere—make the “Public House” a “Coffee House”—we should be helping men and women to cultivate habits of sobriety.’

‘And,’ said Kitty timidly, blushing rosy red at the thought of putting herself forward to speak, but her heart was too full for silence—‘and might it be called the “Very Welcome”? We should keep the V just the same there, and Nancy’s wish would come true. She was always wishing there would be a *good* kind of place to which people could go and come

away better than they went ; and she used to say we could call it the " Very Welcome." '

' A very bright thought, Kitty,' said Mrs. Unwin quietly. ' I will see to-morrow what can be done. We could find a room there large enough for a meeting too, I should think, and we would thus not only keep people away from immediate temptation, in providing them tea and coffee to drink instead of beer, but we could, at the same time, teach them of God's love, His desire to save sinners, his invitation for *all* to repent.'

' If you *do* set the " Very Welcome " going I'll take care to help to fill it,' said Mr. Twyfield with emotion, ' if only for the sake of my little Nancy.'

To-day a large coffee-house affords special attraction to the multitudes who live in its vicinity. Young men, who are lodgers in other people's homes, are glad to spend their evenings there ; and men who have their own firesides, but who have for years cultivated the habit of gathering about the firesides of public-houses, and of sitting in the snug corners of taprooms, flock to this place of rest and recreation ; and thank God that it is to them as a stepping-stone from a life of selfishness and sorrow in the past, to a life of more earnest thought and longing to do right *for the future*.

And on Sunday, when the bright hymns and stirring addresses (the latter given sometimes by Mrs. Unwin herself) induce the men and women who lounge and chat at the doors of their houses, or at some neighbouring street corner, to enter in in great numbers, they prove the correctness of the name by which the hall is called. They know they are indeed 'very welcome' thus to gather within that comfortable room; and many have reason to bless God for the message of His love, which has been given to them and accepted within those walls.

Thus while numbers in that thickly populated district are, by the work of the 'Very Welcome,' aroused to thought, to prayer, to change of heart and life, few to-day know its history, nor ever guess how much the work, which changed the old haunt with its temptations into the new Home, with its blessed power of doing good, was brought about by little children.

Kitty, now growing fast to womanhood, a missionary in other homes, to-day, in her life as a Christian servant, as much as she was God's messenger of peace in her own home years ago, Kitty is most loyal in her heart to the memory of Nancy. And she often wonders *whether Nancy from her home in heaven still reads the*

text that GOD IS LOVE, from those courts and streets around her earthly home. If so, Kitty knows there are two things which will make the text dearer than ever to Nancy; one is the existence of the 'Very Welcome,' and another is, that her father, Mr. Twyfield, is a God-fearing and God-serving man.



HONEST JACK;

OR,

TRUST IN GOD.

CHAPTER I.

IT was a bitterly cold night—the last night of the old year—so cold and frosty that the usually crowded street in the neighbourhood of Westminster seemed almost deserted. Now and then an omnibus would roll quietly by, or a stray cab drive slowly and cautiously over the slippery stones. Foot passengers, evidently bound on some mission of necessity, would brush briskly along, stamping their feet as they went, as if constantly to reassure themselves that they were still in possession of such articles, while all the time the stars were shining brilliantly above, seeming, as they peeped out in untold numbers, to enjoy the silence, and laugh merrily at the great consternation Jack Frost had shed upon the usually *noisy street*.

The hours wore on, the silence became more marked as the night advanced. Eleven o'clock struck ; and this aroused one of the group huddled together in a corner at the top of some steps leading up to a house under repair in that deserted street.

How long they had been there would seem uncertain ; any one in passing might have mistaken the three forming the group for empty sacks thrown carelessly down, so little did they look like human beings in that dark corner.

The chiming of the clock awoke a little lad who had been sleeping heavily with his head resting on a large stone, his body almost entirely concealed under the tattered shawl of a woman—his mother—who, while clasping one arm round the boy, with the other supported a little girl, so pinched and ghastly looking, that had not her gentle breathing given due indications of life, one might have thought she was in the long, long sleep which knows no waking here on earth.

As the last stroke of eleven fell upon his ear the lad started up, and then remembering where he was, he withdrew himself gently from his mother's embrace, and covered the tattered shawl over the arm that had supported him. Peeping fondly into the two *sleeping faces*, he slipt nimbly down the steps, *shook himself* once or twice when he reached the

pavement to be quite sure he was awake, and then crept softly along the street, musing as he went.

‘Well, this, I think, is the most bitter night we have had. Oh ! what misery to have come to this ! Why did we ever come to this dreadful place at all ? And why *don't* they give poor mother work ? Must we starve and die in the streets, or will God really send some one to help us, as mother says He will ? Poor dear mother, how good she is ! How often she says to me, “ Jack, boy, if I should die you must take care of sister Jenny, and try never to forget all I have told you about our Father in heaven, who lets us be poor and miserable often only to try us, but He loves us all the time and keeps watch over us ; so mind you always love Him, Jack, and do what is right and honest.” And then mother tells me how hard it will be sometimes to do what is good and right, but that if I really love God, and pray to Him always, He can keep me pure and honest ; and then mother cries, and says she is sure God has helped her often and often. But it does seem strange that mother, who is so good, should have to suffer so much. I wonder why it all is ? I suppose I shall know some day, when I am a bit bigger grown, for mother seems to think it's all right, and *she* never complains. Oh ! I wish I were *grown big and strong*, wouldn't I work ; mother and

Jenny should never know what it was to feel cold and hungry then ; I'd—'

Jack's musings, carried on as he walked briskly along, trying to get a little warmth into his cold feet—which, blue and chilled, peeped out from the old boots—were suddenly brought to an end by the bells of the church he was at that moment passing bursting forth into a loud peal, an eager, full peal, which, breaking upon little Jack's ear just then, instantly brought to mind the little home in the country, where they used to live before all that trouble came upon them, and father ran away to sea to escape being put in prison—the church standing on the hill just at the end of the village, where Jack went every Sunday morning with granny, so long ago now though that it all seemed like some happy dream, so greatly had sorrow lengthened out the few short years that had actually passed.

Now Jack had heard the bells almost every Sunday since, but they had never seemed to sound as beautiful and so much like the bells at his old village home as now, when they broke forth upon the stillness of that winter night. But Jack wondered what they meant by ringing then. He stopped in utter astonishment. *There was a moment's pause, then 'Come to church,' 'Come to church,' the bells seemed to say,*

each minute growing more earnest in their tone. 'What could it all mean? Who ever heard of people going to church in the middle of the night?' thought Jack. 'Perhaps the bellringers had been dreaming, and imagined it was Sunday morning; but that couldn't possibly be, for it wanted three whole days to Sunday; and then of course nobody could mistake such a bright, starlight night for morning—but oh! how deliciously warm and cosy it must be in there!' exclaimed Jack, half aloud, as just then some one from within opened the massive outer door, and a stream of light burst forth and danced upon the pavement.

Jack's delight was intense. Another minute and he had crept up into the darkest corner of the ancient porch, where he was safe from view and could see if any one passed into the church. He had not long to wait, although for the first ten minutes the arrivals were few and far between, and Jack had no great difficulty in keeping count of the numbers. By-and-by two ladies (with a little page behind them) came briskly up the steps.

'I am glad we walked,' said the elder of the two, as she waited a moment to take the books from the page; 'but I hope, Amy dear, it has not been too *much for you?*' addressing her companion, a beautiful

girl of nineteen, who, in spite of the rich glow which the brisk walk and frosty air had brought to her cheeks, looked very delicate and fragile.

‘Oh, no, dear mamma, thank you, I am not at all tired,’ was the reply, spoken in a clear, sweet voice, which deepened as she added tenderly, ‘I am so glad you did not oppose my coming. Next New Year’s Eve, mamma—’

The rest Jack did not catch, as the two ladies had passed into the church and their voices died away ; but he peeped round the corner to have another look at the face of the young lady, and said to himself—Jack was very fond of talking to himself, as we have seen—

‘Oh, don’t she look happy ! I wonder now whether she ever thinks about such folks as mother, and Jenny, and me, who hardly know what it is now-a-days to be warm and happy ?’ Warmth and happiness always went together in Jack’s mind, and no wonder they should just now, for a cold searching wind seemed to meet him as he for a moment came out of his corner, and caused his little limbs (somewhat stiff from sitting so long on the stone) to tremble and shake so violently, that he was glad to sit down again and lock his chin fast between his knees.

A minute or two afterwards and a handsome carriage

with a pair of grey horses drew up, and after this cabs and carriages came in such rapid succession that Jack had no time for further thought about his own and his mother's sorrows, being so much interested in watching the people alight and hasten out of the cold into the church.

By-and-by the great clock, which had, when striking eleven, aroused little Jack from his slumbers, chimed the half-hour ; the last bell spoke for a few seconds in its quiet persuasive monotones, ' Come, come, come,' then ceased, and all was silent *outside* ; but inside Jack thought something beautiful must be going on, for every now and then he caught the sound of music through the closed door, and once when they were singing, Jack thought he must be in a dream, it sounded so like what mother often told him the good people sang up in heaven, where dear old granny and little sister Alice had gone. Yes, he was sure they were singing Hallelujah ! hallelujah ! ' Oh, if mother were only there to hear them !'

So passed nearly an hour, when the people streamed forth from the again wide-open doors of the church, some to enter their carriages and drive off home to their bright fires and warm beds, others to take the first cab they could get, while many started off briskly *to walk—all going to their homes, all provided with*

shelter, and many doubtless with all the comforts and luxuries of life, this cold and frosty New Year's morn.

Jack must have been dozing, for he started up just as the last people were leaving and rubbed his eyes.

'I wonder whether *she's* gone?' he said to himself, as he saw the people passing down the steps. 'No, there she is. Oh, I am so glad she hadn't gone. I dreamt I had been telling her all about poor mother and Jenny. Oh, I wish I *could* tell her; I'm sure she'd help us, she looks so kind and good—oh, I declare she sees me!'—for Jack in his eagerness had risen and come out of his dark corner, and the light was falling full on his pinched little face, thereby drawing the attention of the object of his thoughts and admiration.

The young lady whispered something to her mamma, then stepped up to Jack, drawing from her pocket a pretty blue purse; taking sixpence from it, she put it into the boy's hand, saying,—'There, little boy, go home now, and in the morning you can buy a loaf of bread with this;' and before Jack (who was dumb with astonishment at the seeming reality of his dream) could say a word, Amy had followed her mamma down the steps. Jack rushed after her, but *only in time* to see the little page close the door of an *elegant carriage* and spring on the box.

The carriage drove off and left Jack still staring as if in a dream. A minute afterwards and his eye caught sight of something lying at his feet ; he picked it up, and behold ! it was a blue purse, *her* purse, Jack was sure, for he had noticed it in her hand when she gave him the sixpence.

What was to be done ? Jack could still see the lights of the carriage, so he set off running as fast as ever he could to try to overtake it, but it soon turned a corner, and Jack after a few minutes, quite out of breath and greatly bewildered in the labyrinth of streets into which he had got (after taking a short cut with the hope of coming upon the carriage somewhere, where it might have gone to, he thought), was obliged to give up all idea of pursuit, and was greatly perplexed to know what he had better do next.

Poor Jack ! it was a moment of great temptation to him, for after he had given up all hopes of overtaking the carriage the thought came, suggested with all the craft and subtilty of the tempter, ' Well, you did your best to let the lady have her purse, but it was of no use, so you may now consider it is yours ; you certainly found it, and finding's keeping.'

' Was it possible ? Had he a right to the purse ? Would there be something bright after all in store for *mother*—a few shillings to get her a lodging until she

could find work—something to buy food with for ever so many days to come? Could this be the help mother was always saying God would send in His own good time?’ and a warm, glowing feeling stole into little Jack’s heart as he clasped the purse more tightly in his now burning hands.

Surely if the ‘powers of darkness’ could be seen in human form, Satan would have been visible on that starlight night trying to tempt a poor little boy to evil. In a stooping, coaxing attitude, his face wearing a smile half persuasive, half exulting, the enemy of good would have appeared whispering to the child, as he stood there doubtful and irresolute, sweet coy words—words which have seduced many and many a one from the path of honesty and virtue—words which, when spoken to those who stand in their own strength, who know not what it is to look up in the hour of temptation and grasp more firmly the hand of the loving Friend who has promised we shall ‘not be tempted above that we are able,’ are full of power to destroy. But the loving trust implanted in this youthful heart by a faithful mother’s teaching was not forgotten in this hour of need; Jack’s hesitation was but for a moment; the very thought of keeping the purse for mother’s good seemed to bring to mind *what mother often said about right and wrong, and*

the child could have fancied he actually heard a voice repeating in those sad and solemn tones he knew so well, 'Jack, lad, look to God at all times, and especially when tempted to do wrong.' The little fellow looked up to the starlit sky, uttering from his heart the prayer he had learnt at his mother's knee, 'Lord, help me to do right. Teach me to love Thee, strengthen me to serve Thee, and be Thou the Guide of my youth, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.' And with that prayer came the full conviction of what was right. There were no doubts lingering in Jack's mind as he put the purse carefully in the only safe pocket of his tattered coat and trudged back to his mother.

He had been tempted, and he had conquered. Somehow—Jack could not quite understand it—he felt he had been saved from doing something very wrong, and there was a glow of thankfulness and gladness in his heart as he crept up close to his mother, when he at length reached those cold steps (where he found the two he had left two hours ago still sleeping), a kind of happiness in picturing his mother's joy in the morning when he told her all about the purse, and how God *had* helped him to be pure and honest.

Poor little Jack ; it was a very hard bed on which *he lay down to rest his cold limbs and wait for the*

morning, but any one might have envied him his peaceful mind. 'Mother will tell me what to do,' the little fellow said to himself as he nestled up under a piece of the tattered shawl, and stole an arm around the sleeping form it partially covered, and in a few minutes he was fast asleep.

CHAPTER II.

THREE days had passed since we left little Jack sleeping in the early hours of the New Year's morn. It was Sunday. The frost had gone, and the sun was streaming down upon the people leaving an old church in the neighbourhood of Westminster, with so much power as to make many exclaim, 'It is really quite spring-like!' A little ragged boy, with a clean, though pinched-looking face, stood near the principal exit, eagerly scanning the features of every one who came out. Many noticed the little fellow; some to pity, some to scold for standing in the way, but he was evidently too intent in looking out for somebody *in particular* to care anything about the people in *general* who passed him, unless they impeded his

view, and then he would move a little on one side and wait for an opportunity to slip back again to his old place, but never once taking his eyes off the door.

Presently, after some ten minutes' watching, the lad's face brightened up, and scarcely had a tall lady, handsomely dressed in fur, made her way down the steps, than her dress was eagerly seized to arrest her just as she was stepping into her carriage, and an excited voice exclaimed, 'Please, stop a minute ; oh, I am so glad, and mother will be so pleased !'

The lady looked astonished, but said, kindly, 'What is it, little boy ?'

And Jack—for it was he—almost out of breath with excitement and pleasure, went on rapidly, 'You were with *her*, the beautiful young lady, I mean, when she gave me the sixpence out of her blue purse as she went away from church the other night. She dropped her purse, and I picked it up after the carriage had gone off, and here it is ;' and, putting his hand in his pocket, Jack triumphantly pulled out the purse and gave it to the lady, exclaiming again, 'I'm so glad !'

The lady, whose look of astonishment, when Jack first spoke to her, had changed into one of great pleasure as he went on with his explanation, paused *for a moment* with the purse in her hand as if deep

in thought, then, stepping into her carriage, she bade Jack follow her, and the next minute they were driving away, our poor little friend in a perfect maze of bewilderment.

After a pause, in which the lady had been watching intently Jack's pinched and, now that the first glow of pleasure and surprise had faded away, his pale little face, reading as she did so a life's story of sorrow and want, and realising, perhaps more fully than she had ever done before, the power of good over evil (for she thought it impossible for that child, bearing every trace of want and hunger as he did, to have that purse three days in his possession without being tempted to keep it), that power which is as strong when dwelling in the heart of a little ragged boy as when upholding the steps of a saintly Paul, or strengthening the weakness of a frail, yet Jesus-loving Peter: the lady, touched with the story that little pinched face revealed, and taking home to herself these deep lessons of truth, drew little Jack kindly towards her, and asked him to tell her all about finding the purse, and why he had watched for her at the church door that morning.

And Jack, a little shyly at first, but feeling more at home with the kind lady every minute, told plainly *and simply* how he found the purse, and what fol-

lowed, not even omitting the moment of temptation, when—and his voice was lowered at this part of the story—‘I was just going to do something very wrong,’ confessed the boy, ‘and I thought of mother, and what she always tells me I must do when Satan tempts me, as he was, I am sure, doing then ; I just asked God to help me, and He did help me.’

Little Jack, too, spoke of his mother’s joy the next morning when he told her all about the purse ; how the good woman had cried, and thanked God for taking care of her little son, and that it was she who had thought of the plan of going to watch at the church door that morning ; ‘and,’ concluded Jack, drawing a long breath of satisfaction, ‘how glad mother will be when I tell her I *did* find you !’

Soon the carriage entered a square, and drew up before a large corner house. The lady alighting bade Jack follow her ; and he, thinking ‘it couldn’t all be true, he must be in a dream,’ soon found himself in a spacious room, where, at the far end, he saw his friend the young lady, who was lying upon a couch with a book in her hand when they entered, but who jumped up joyfully as her mamma said, going up to her,—

‘Amy, you were right. There is One who can *preserve the frailest mortal in temptation’s hour, even*

a poor half-starved boy. I have learned a lesson to-day of the power of that love which I shall never forget. Here is your purse, and there,' pointing to Jack, who stood trembling, cap in hand, near the door through which they had come in, 'your honest little friend.'

Amy, whose smile gladdened poor little Jack's heart on New Year's Eve, and whom he had afterwards described to his mother as being 'like a beautiful angel without any wings,' came forward quickly, saying, 'Let me shake hands with you, little boy ;' then in an undertone to herself, 'Father, I thank Thee for hearing my prayer,' she placed little Jack, ragged and tattered though he was, on a chair beside herself, and inquired eagerly all about the lost purse.

After hearing Jack's story, Amy said, 'Now I will tell you how anxious I have been about you since I saw you the other night. Just as we were driving away, after I had given you the sixpence in the porch, I thought I saw you run down the steps as if you meant to follow us. Moving a little to see you more plainly, I watched you standing still upon the pavement looking after us, until you seemed to stoop down as if to pick something up. When we reached home I missed my purse, and thought directly I must have dropped it in getting into the carriage, and that *you had picked it up* when I saw you bending down.

When I remembered your little pinched face I trembled to think the temptation it might be to you, and knowing there was only One who could help you to be honest, I asked Him to give you strength and teach you what was right. My address was inside the purse, so I felt sure, had my prayer been heard, I should see you soon. But when Thursday, Friday, and Saturday passed, and you never came, I felt so sad and disappointed, and could not help fearing I should never see either you or my purse again. But tell me,' and Amy laid her hand kindly on Jack's shoulder, 'did you not open the purse?' for while speaking she had touched the spring, and the purse opening, revealed not only some gold and silver, but her card, with her name and address upon it, just where it was always kept.

'No, ma'am,' Jack replied softly, twisting his cap round and round in his hands ; 'we never thought of finding out where you lived *there*, and mother said there was no use in our opening the purse and catching sight of the money, it might be too much for us, especially when on Friday Jenny fretted so, and kept on asking mother and me to go and get her something nice to eat ; the bread we had saved from our Thursday's loaf was so dry, and her mouth was so sore *with the cold*. But,' continued Jack, looking up

almost lovingly into the kind faces bent down towards him, 'mother and me made so sure of finding you, we did.'

Amy then inquired into Jack's history, and a sad, sad tale it was, told with all the candour and simplicity of a child, but of one who had learned early the power of sorrow and the temptations it brings. It was almost strange to hear so young a child—for Jack was scarcely ten—talk of the many, many troubles which had befallen 'mother.' How 'father ran away to sea, breaking mother's heart nearly;' how 'dear old granny had taken care of them until she went home to heaven;' how 'since then mother had moved from place to place, seeking, but seldom finding, work enough to keep them from want;' yet struggling on and hoping for brighter days, in spite of misfortunes, until the climax to their grief came some three months ago, when a fever, which had laid them all low by turns, carried little Alice off, and left mother more penniless and destitute even than before.

Simply and quietly the story was told. A gentle word from Amy, or a timely question from her mamma, helping Jack to go on when every now and then he came to a standstill, as if he could scarcely *bear to think of* all the sorrows they had had to *endure*. *And throughout it all the love for mother and*

the pure and childlike confidence in a higher love—the greater understood and realised as it were by the lesser—seemed to shine like a silver lining to the dark cloud which had hung over his young life.

Truly that mother—sad and bitter as her lot had been, driving her, as it must have done but for her faith, to a life of carelessness and sin—had not neglected to teach her little son of that which is alone the source and foundation of true happiness and peace, a loving, trusting belief in the power and goodness of God. The trial of faith had been great, greater perhaps even than we, who can but faintly guess *all* that that poor woman had gone through, are able to understand. Or, on the other hand, those who know not the real power of the ‘strength made perfect in weakness,’ may doubt that ‘frail humanity’ could stand so sharp a test. But to such we would say, did not one of old pass through even a greater ordeal, and say, with all the wisdom and beauty of a trustful resignation, ‘Though He slay me, *yet* will I trust in Him!’ To those who rest their hopes upon God’s promises, there is no room in their minds for doubts as to the limits of His power. They know, and every rough corner in their path through life which they have had to pass has proved to them *more surely*, that the promise, ‘As thy days so shall

thy strength be,' is not one of mere empty words.

And this our poor little Jack's mother could bear testimony to. But the night of sorrow was fast drawing to a close. She had sowed in tears—sowed the seeds of love and trust in the hearts of her helpless children when all was dark and sorrowful—and now the day was dawning which was to see her reap in joy the fruits of that loving labour. Her prayers and teachings had guided little Jack in an hour of temptation, and 'all things working together for good,' as they do to 'those who love God,' that very temptation conquered was the means of securing friends, and through them a home to that poor sorrowful mother and her children.

Jack concluded his story with such an outburst of real hearty desire to be able to work for 'mother and Jenny,' that would, had it not already been done, have quite won the hearts of his kind listeners. His own idea was that he was big enough, and strong enough too, to work, if only the good lady would get him something to do. But of this both Amy and her mother had their doubts, as they looked at the delicate form of the poor boy, although they would not distress him by telling him so. Instead of which *they suggested* Jack should go down to the nice

warm kitchen below and have something to eat, of which they felt sure he would be glad, and afterwards he should go off with all speed to find 'mother and Jenny,' and bring them at once to the house.

The meal the kind cook placed before Jack, when he was sent into the kitchen, was quickly eaten, as we may imagine ; and soon our little ragged friend, all excitement and animation, was running with all possible speed towards the street where he had left his mother and sister in the morning.

That night Jack and his mother and Jenny did not sleep in the streets, nor did they go to bed supperless.

CHAPTER III.

FOUR years have passed. Jack, no longer a pinched, half-starved lad, but a plump, healthy-looking boy, with the same honest-looking face, but many shades brighter than formerly, could be seen in his neat page's dress every Sunday morning, when fine, following a lady to church.

Jack is certainly much altered since we saw him on that New Year's Eve four years ago ; but not so the

lady whose books he carries to church. She has the same beaming smile, the same benevolent look as won the heart of that little ragged boy crouching in the corner of the old church porch. She has always a kind word for the sorrowful ones now as then ; as she catches sight of the pinched face and hungry eyes she remembers the touching story of want and distress which (as in little Jack's case) they so often reveal, and never does she lose an opportunity of learning a little of the history of those brought immediately under her notice ; so that, guided and helped by the Master she serves, she may discern the worthy, and encourage and assist those who are, in spite of poverty and want, nobly battling with sin, striving to be honest and pure while dwelling in the very midst of temptation.

Amy—for she it is, Jack's friend and benefactress—is now married, and our hero has been living in her service for more than a year, ever since he left the school in which his kind young mistress placed him four years ago.

And his mother ?

In one of the prettiest parts of Hertfordshire, some twenty miles from London, there is a small village where Amy's uncle has lived for many years the beloved rector. Some four years ago, when Amy *first became* acquainted with Jack, she wrote to her

uncle, asking his advice, and wondering how best to help the mother and little girl, who, from the exposure to want and cold, were both too sickly and weak to do anything for a living just at present.

Mr. Rolfutone, a kind good man, who had always taken a most fatherly interest in his niece, more especially since the death of her papa, which happened when she was little more than twelve years old, wrote at once to Amy, offering a small cottage, then vacant in the village, for Jack's mother and sister. They should have it rent free for the first six months, until the poor woman could comfortably afford to pay the little that was asked, after laying in a small stock of furniture, which he hoped she would be able to get from her weekly earnings, as soon as she was well enough to do the needlework the ladies of his parish had promised to supply her with. Jack, he suggested, should be sent to a school, an institution he could recommend, where he would be well fed and cared for until old enough to earn his own living.

And so 'all things had worked together for good,' and little Jenny and her mother found a comfortable home in good Mr. Rolfutone's parish ; while Jack had been placed by Amy in the institution her uncle advised, where he would be well fed and cared for as *well as educated*, the only drawback to his own entire

happiness being the fact that he was so far from mother and Jenny.

And now, after four years have passed, we find that poor mother (no longer friendless) still occupying that small cottage.

Jenny attends the day-school, where she is often praised by her teachers for her industry, while all, teachers and schoolfellows alike, love her for her gentleness and amiable disposition. And at home Jenny is like a sunbeam in the cottage, lightening her mother's cares, and sending a ray of sunshine into the still often sorrowful heart—for there are at times anxious thoughts that will burden that heart respecting the fate of the one who had so cruelly left her and her little ones to battle with the cold world—the husband who, to escape imprisonment, perhaps transportation, had, with others more worthy of punishment even than himself, had sought refuge in flight, and never since been heard of.

But the red-lettered days are those when Jack is spared to spend a little time with his mother and sister, which happens very often, as Amy makes a point of bringing her page with her whenever she comes down to spend a few hours at the rectory. *Then, with Jack there, that little cottage is indeed full of happiness.* But while dwelling upon the joys

of the present and the hopes of the future (one of the brightest of which is, that Jenny will one day be lady's maid to Jack's kind mistress, according to her promise), we may be sure they do not forget to think of the past. And although the tears will start sometimes in recalling those sorrowful days, yet the smile of thankfulness soon comes to chase them away.

And while that good mother, who has grown in grace and become stronger in faith, ever seeks to teach her children to look upwards, bidding them remember Who it is who watches over and helps those faithful and earnest to do good, she enforces her lesson of truth by pointing out to them the many ways in which He did help and succour them in times past ; so that, in the ' full assurance of faith,' built on the memory of never-to-be-forgotten mercies, they may the more fully realise the unbounded wealth of that power and goodness which ever surround and uphold the ' children of God.'

'Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.'



POOR LITTLE ME.



CHAPTER I.

PAPA! Papa!' exclaimed half-a-dozen eager little voices, as the nursery door opened, and papa peeped in to give the 'little folks' a good-morning smile before going off to business. 'Come and romp;' 'Be big wolf;' 'Please give me a *big* jump;' 'Let me ride round the room on your shoulder;' 'Me, papa, me!' were variously shouted out by the little group, which, as soon as papa was fairly in the nursery, danced round him, climbed upon him, and tugged at his coat-tails.

'My dears, give me breathing-time,' said papa, making his way to the big arm-chair, and sinking into it laughingly, with an air of exhaustion. 'Was there ever a poor papa so tormented, when in an innocent and friendly manner he stepped into the nursery to wish his little folks good morning? Oh! dear—let me breathe, I say! There! stand off a moment, *Harold*. What is it, Maudie? Here, Ernest, make

way for baby!’ and papa, laughing and panting for breath, hugged them all by turns, and blessed them fondly; while mamma, who had just come into the nursery, stood by with a beaming face, the very picture of happy motherhood.

‘There! I must go now; I *really* must, children,’ exclaimed Mr. Mortimer, after racing Harold round the table, playing wolf with Ernest and Maudie, and taking Master Baby, little Kathleen, and Connie for a ride on his shoulder. ‘Papa must be off and earn some pennies for his “little folks,” to get them plenty of roast beef and some warm stockings this cold, frosty weather.’

‘And to buy Christmas presents with,’ said Maud, archly.

‘Christmas presents, indeed!’ said Mr. Mortimer, buttoning up his coat, and pretending to look greatly surprised; ‘who would ever have thought of such a thing! Christmas presents, indeed! Nurse, I am surprised you let your little people get such fancies into their heads! Ah! you must wait until my ship comes in—unless you coax mamma to lend me some money. Supposing you try, Maudie. How much do you think we should want to buy—well, just a few things, you know—say a doll or two, and a pop-gun, and some sweeties—I suppose they would suit

your little ladyship, eh?' and Mr. Mortimer patted Maudie's rosy cheek.

Maud looked thoughtful for a moment, as if in deep consideration, and then very gently suggested, 'Two pennies would be wanted.'

At this the boys, who were a little more learned in money matters than Maud, shouted with glee, and papa had to go through the pleasant business of another romp, to give vent to the high spirits thus quickly aroused.

Then there were good-byes in right earnest, big hugs from little people, kissing hands and waving pocket-handkerchiefs, and papa was fairly on his way to business, taking with him the bright memory of that happy half-hour with the children.

Mr. Mortimer walked along briskly, as a man with a glad heart and easy conscience is apt to walk. His pleasant face was evidently well known to passers-by. A nod here and a smile there, a brief pause occasionally to shake hands with a client who looked for such friendly acknowledgment—all seemed to come most naturally to the well-to-do, easy-tempered solicitor, who, however much he had spent his life amongst musty parchments and dry folios, bore no traces of *either 'mustiness' or 'dryness' in his cheerful countenance and genial manner.*

Once only did a shadow cross his face, and that was in passing a street corner, where a large gin-palace stood. Happening to look in at the half-open door—a haggard-looking woman was just coming out, with a baby in her arms—Mr. Mortimer caught sight of a tall man leaning against the counter, with a short clay pipe in his mouth, and a glass of spirits in his hand.

‘So he is still at it!’ said Mr. Mortimer to himself. ‘I wonder whether Elliot sent him his dismissal yesterday? Poor Corbane, what a terrible thing it is, and his wife only lately confined, too! Dear me! when a man once gets fond of drink it’s all up with him! Who would have thought that his father and mine were second cousins, and, at one time, both county magistrates? I don’t know, but, after all, I don’t believe there is much blessing ever got with brewers’ gold. The brewer only does by deputy what the publican does personally. I don’t hold with the teetotallers in their sweeping denunciations, which are as unchristian as untrue—for I believe in honest brewers and honest publicans; but facts are *facts*, and somehow I have often remarked that there is but a scanty blessing with wealth made—however honestly and innocently—out of the weaknesses and sins of *our fellow-creatures*. Say it’s as legitimate to sell

beer as to sell bread, and I say, Bah! stuff and rubbish! while selling beer and so forth means not supplying men with necessary drink, but pandering to, if not creating, unhealthy appetites and wants, turning men into brutes, women into fiends, and stealing all the gladness and laughter from the little children! If no more strong drink were sold in the land than was actually necessary as an article of diet for every man, woman, and child—well, there would be fewer fortunes made by brewers and publicans, and, I imagine, fewer men anxious to devote their lives to the trade. I should like to know if Mackintosh, of the “Little Horse-Shoe,” would care to have his licence transferred to the “New Cut,” about which he came to me yesterday, if he only hoped to sell just exactly what was necessary to the wants of the people in proportion as his brother—the baker—disposes of his bread? It strikes me, under those conditions, Mackintosh would prefer going back to the foundry which he left a year ago to make his fortune (as he told me in confidence), assured of the fact that “the best trade going now-a-days was the brewers’ and the publicans’.”

All this time Mr. Mortimer had not slackened his pace nor forgotten his friendly greetings to the people *he met*. His meditations were brought to a close at

the corner of a broad street, where, upon the door-post at the foot of the staircase leading up to the 'Turner Street Chambers,' the names of 'Mortimer and Elliot, solicitors,' appeared amongst several others.

Mounting a broad, oaken staircase, Mr. Mortimer turned to the right on the first landing and entered an office, which led into his own private room. It still wanted some few minutes to ten o'clock, and the clerks were sitting on the table, swinging their legs and discussing the news of the day. Mr. Mortimer's entrance was the signal for them to come down from their elevated position and distribute themselves hurriedly to their various desks.

'Well, Seymour,' said Mr. Mortimer, stopping a senior clerk as he was preparing to go off with the rest, 'have you seen anything of Corbane the last day or two?'

'No, sir,' replied Seymour, shaking his head sadly; 'Burton saw him led home last night, but he was too far gone to be spoken to. It is a bad business, very bad!'


'Yes; it's bad for him and bad for us!' said Mr. Mortimer, thoughtfully. 'By the way, you ordered that dozen of port to go to his wife? She is most to be pitied; I wish we could help the poor creature in some way!'

‘I am afraid the port wine would not help her much, sir. I heard that poor Corbane started drinking the moment the hamper got there. You see, sir,’ added Seymour, gently, as if anxious not to wound Mr. Mortimer’s feelings, having a great affection and respect for him, as indeed had all the clerks, ‘you see, sir, the least thing of that kind becomes a temptation to a man like Corbane; it is like putting fire to touchwood—it may smoulder a little only at first, but there is sure to be a good flame by-and-by.’

Mr. Mortimer moved off into his own private office and closed the door. He sat down, and bent his head thoughtfully upon his hand. Seymour’s last remark was not lost upon him, though he had made no reply to it.

‘Is it possible,’ he mused, ‘that in doing what I thought to be a kindly action, I have tempted the poor fellow to yield to his besetting sin? To say the least of it, I have made it easier for him to transgress, I fear. God forgive me! He knows such a thing was farthest from my thoughts. It’s one of the things a man does without thinking; but, if I read my Bible aright, *want of thought does not excuse sin*. Ah! I remember as a lad how startled I was at that *verse in the Psalms* about the wicked being turned *into hell, and all the nations that forget God*. It was

one of my prime excuses, "I quite forgot," "I never once thought of it." But I never used *that* as an excuse after my mother one day put her finger on the verse and asked me to read it over, on my knees. Poor Mrs. Corbane! what that young thing has had to suffer, Heaven only knows; and if I have added to that suffering! Dear me! Seymour has made me very uncomfortable, though after all it may not be as bad as it seems. I think I will walk round that way when I go home to luncheon, and if any good can be done I will get my wife to call upon the poor thing; and Mr. Mortimer turned round to the table and began to open his letters. A goodly pile lay before him, and he soon became fully absorbed with their contents, and poor Corbane, and the unfortunate gift of port wine—which Mr. Mortimer had asked Seymour to tell his wine-merchant to send to the wife when he heard of her confinement—were soon dismissed from his mind.



CHAPTER II.

A SMALL room, a small fire, and three small children playing with their dolls.

‘Oh dear! my Dolly has very bad headache this morning,’ said little Totty, number two of the small children. ‘It’s because she’s got a new baby, like mamma. Mamma never had headache till new baby came, and now old nurse won’t let us make the smallest, littlest noise, because she’s always got big headache.’

‘I shouldn’t mind if *my* Miss Dolly *had* got headache,’ said Helen, the eldest of the three, ‘she would not be in so big pain as she is. Do you know, her naughty, wicked husband has been getting tipsy, and giving her a black bruised nose—just like poor papa gave poor mamma on Sunday. I’m sure I don’t know *what’s* to be done; I’m at my wit’s end of thinking;’ and little Helen heaved a very natural sigh, and looked truly most sad.

‘Let’s pray for Dolly,’ said Totty thoughtfully, ‘as mamma tells us to pray for papa.’

‘I don’t see what’s the use,’ said Helen, shaking *her head sadly*. ‘Our praying has done no good to *papa*; *perhaps* it won’t to Dolly. Totty, I know

what I wish ! I wish papa would go out for a sail in a boat, like the boat we saw on the sea last summer, and that the boat would get upset, and papa be drowned ! Mamma wouldn't have to cry then, and we shouldn't be always frightened when we heard the street door bang, as we are now, and have to run and hide.'

'P'r'aps we'd cry if we had no papa,' said Totty, whose baby heart was full of tenderness towards her father : she was two years younger than Helen, and did not understand so fully the sorrows the mother had to endure when papa was drinking ; besides this, she was her father's pet, and was less harshly treated than the others, even when her father was most frantic.

'I don't think we *should*,' said Helen. 'I always say in my prayers at night now, "Please, God, bless mamma and all of us, and let papa die as soon as you can ;" only I don't let mamma hear me say it, because once it made her cry so very, very much, and she said I mustn't do it. But there's no harm in *ask-ing* ; God won't do what's not right, mamma always says ; so, if it's wrong for papa to die, he won't die, only I *do* hope it's right, for I heard old nurse downstairs telling Mrs. Stubbins (when she brought home our clean pinafores) that he was killing poor mamma

by inches; and if it's wicked to kill people, I'm sure it's not wrong to ask God to make papa die soon, for what *should* we do if he killed the very last inch of mamma?'

Just then child number three, who had all this time been busily engaged trying to poke the eyes into the head of a wax doll, having succeeded to its heart's content, threw the poor disfigured dolly to the other side of the room, and made a rush at Helen's doll, bent upon its sharing a similar fate. A struggle ensued, in which master Tommy came off vanquished—a fact notified by a loud cry, which Helen immediately tried to hush, promising all sorts of rewards if he would stop making a noise that very minute, because of 'poor mamma.'

In the meantime Totty slipped quietly out of the room, and with very careful footsteps stole downstairs.

In the room below the one in which the children had been playing lay the young mother, her white face resting upon the pillow, side by side with the round pink face, carefully wrapped in flannel, of baby number four, who was a week old to-day. For some time the young mother had been listening to the hushed movements of the children, a look of intense anxiety upon her face. She heard the door open, *and little Totty* steal softly down. She watched to

see her pass the door of the room in which she lay ; but Totty had no intention of passing. Very quietly, and almost shyly, the little sun-tipped head, with its round rosy face and merry eyes, peeped in.

‘ May Totty come ? ’ asked the child in a whisper. ‘ I’s very tired of play, and I’s want to kiss my own mamma.’

‘ Yes, you may come in, pet,’ said the young mother, extending a hand towards Totty. The child needed no further permission. Throwing the door wide open, she glanced round the room, and as if quite relieved at some discovery, skipped upon the floor, turned round and round, and danced and clapped her hands with glee. Was it not the first time for a whole week that she had been allowed to come into the mother’s room without ‘ old nurse ’ saying ‘ Hush ! ’ and frightening her into silence by her solemn manner and uplifted finger ? Generally, nurse had taken her by the hand and led her up to the bedside to kiss mamma and baby sister, and then had told her ‘ to be good, and go,’ ‘ mamma’s head ached, she could not do with little girls,’ and so forth. But nurse’s chair was vacant to-day, and Totty was bent upon celebrating the fact with a small dance and shout of joy.

At length she brought her dance to a close with a *bound into a chair* which stood by the bed. Another

moment, and she had perched herself on the pillow beside her mother, almost breathless, but radiant with delight.

‘My Totty seems glad,’ said the mother fondly, stroking the child’s soft cheeks with a lingering touch.

‘I’s quite glad *now*,’ said Totty, folding her hands complacently. ‘I love mamma, but I *hate* old nurse and new baby!’

‘Hush!’ said the mother gently; ‘my little Totty should not say so. Nurse has been very kind to mamma, and some day the new baby will run about and play with Totty.’

The child shook her head doubtfully. Just then the ‘new baby,’ as if to plead for attention and to certify its rights, began to cry feebly. In a moment Totty was off the bed, a puzzled look upon her face, her little limbs trembling—she had hoped that ‘old nurse and new baby’ had gone away together. She was not prepared to find *it* there.

It was not the first scene of the kind the mother had had. Totty, in her turn, had been objected to as strongly by the then reigning baby as she was now protesting against the last arrival. Motherly wisdom *suggested* a way of reconciliation.

‘*See, Totty, what tiny hands baby has; look at her*

little eyes and nose and mouth ; come, touch her wee ears ; see, are they not pretty ? ’

Totty’s hard little heart was melted. Very timidly she passed her hand over the baby-face, then looking up full into her mother’s eyes, she said, ‘ Dear baby ; *nice* baby ! Totty love mamma’s new baby ! ’ and she touched it softly with her chubby little forefinger.

The banging of the street door caused both mother and Totty to start. Another moment and heavy footsteps were heard upon the stairs. The young mother’s cheek turned pale ; Totty flew to the distant side of the bed. The door—which Totty in her dance had closed, hoping to keep out all intruders, she was in terrible dread of the solemn nurse’s return—opened roughly, and a tall, finely-built man, of about five-and-thirty, entered the room. His cheeks were flushed and his eyes bloodshot, and glowing with an unhealthy fire. He approached the bedside with unsteady steps.

‘ You told me to come home early, wife ; I hope you’re satisfied,’ he said, in uneven, drawling tones. ‘ I’ve got some news for you. The governor has given me the sack, so I’m a gentleman at large, and think of taking a room at the “ Golden Lion,” to invite my friends to drink to the health of my future *prosperity* ; eh, lassie ? You are not going to be

foolish enough to cry? Why, it's not so bad, but it might have been worse.'

'Oh, Stephen!' said the young wife, sobbing, 'to-morrow's rent—what *shall* we do? He said he would not give us a moment after twelve o'clock, he has already waited so long. I've sent nurse away to-day to save a few shillings, and then I could only pay her half what we owe her, and promise her the rest some other time. You said you would bring me a few pounds to-day, that Mr. Elliot would advance your next quarter's salary, and now—and now—you tell me he has turned you away! Oh! what will become of us and our helpless little ones?' and the poor woman sobbed hysterically, while little Totty set up a loud cry from her hidden corner, the other side of the bed.

'Oh, if *that's* your little game, I'm off, Clara; I'm not going to stop to be lectured by any woman, least of all by my wife!' said the young man hotly, hastening towards the door. 'You won't catch me coming home again in a hurry, I can tell you. I'm sick of seeing you cry. Bah! what a baby you are; why can't you face trouble as *I* do?' and Stephen Corbane strutted angrily from the room.

Poor Clara! It was hard to keep back the cry which seemed to be wrung from her anguished heart.

She felt it would be a relief to scream ; but Totty's sobs helped her to keep calm. She was but a poor weak woman, but for her children's sake she would be strong. She would not weep. No ; her heart should quite break first. O God, for help to keep strong and brave ! O Jesus, Man of sorrows, for power to rest the bleeding, aching heart on Thee !'

So Clara thought and prayed aloud, clasping her new-born babe convulsively to her breast, until, faint and exhausted, she sank into unconsciousness.

Little Totty knelt by the bedside with folded hands and upturned face. Mamma was praying ; she would pray too. Totty had many 'Amens' and many pauses. The little voice was very pleading :

'Kind Saviour, bless good mamma. Amen. Bless poor naughty papa. Make poor mamma's headache go. Amen. Don't let nasty old nurse come back again. Make Totty good, and let we live in the green fields country, where real, live lambs grow. Amen. *Please* don't let papa die yet : take his bad heart, and give him good heart. Let heaven be full of green fields and apple-dumplings. Amen. And don't let the wicked drink be there, which makes poor mamma cry, and little Totty cry, and all of us cry. Kind *Jesus, I's a bad little heart, please kiss it and make it*

good. I do love You, I do, 'cause mamma does, and You makes her glad, she says. Mamma's kind Jesus; Totty's kind Jesus. Amen.'

And soon little Totty was fast asleep, curled up like a ball by the side of her unconscious mother.

Poor Clara Corbane! but for the cruel drink—the curse of our country, the despoiler of home joy and peace—how happy might you not have been in wifehood and motherhood! Only eight short years ago, since a blooming, happy girl, you stood beside your husband, and promised to 'love, honour, and obey him.' You have been faithful to your vows—how has he kept his? Has he *loved* you when, in his moments of passion, he has brutally cursed you, and stabbed your heart with harsh and bitter words? Has he *honoured* you when he has treated you with scorn, neglected you, and made you a by-word amongst your neighbours? Has he *cherished* you, when the hand, that should have been your guide and support, has been uplifted against you, the husband's care and tenderness forgotten in selfish thoughts and deeds? Ah! you say, the drink has made him forget his vows. He would have been to you all he promised on that marriage-day, but for the tyrant whose slave he has become.

Faithful, loving, patient wife! God marks your

faithfulness, and He will strengthen your courage! You are not alone in your sorrow. He is near to comfort and bless. May He kindle into warmth the cold hearts of those around you, who witness your anguish, but do not lift a finger to ease you of your burden. May He inspire the good, and great, and noble to live out the prayer they utter, 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,' that their example may teach a purer creed than that which accounts it a more manly thing to yield to social customs, than to fight courageously a country's foe; or that it is wiser to be thought 'tolerant' than 'true.' God help men to call things by their right names, and to be faithful to His teaching, though all the world should scoff and sneer! When this is so, the young men of to-day—who, by their home-training and after-life in shop or office, are but too often forming habits which, in the future, make them ready captives to the enemy, strong drink (when, with subtle craftiness he stealthily attacks a weak point of the citadel)—would be made, not free from temptation, but *strong to resist it* when it came.

Had Stephen Corbane thought it as manly to be firm, to keep out of temptation by not going into it, to resist rather than yield—as he had deemed it *necessary to do* as others did, and be what others

were, he would not now have been the poor weak slave he was, and Clara would never have known the bitter sorrows of a drunkard's wife!

CHAPTER III.

MR. MORTIMER was too busy—as it not unfrequently happened—when one o'clock came, to go home to luncheon. He ate a few stale biscuits and drank a glass of sherry in his office, and worked on until five o'clock, when, remembering he had some one coming to dine with him that night, he hastily locked up and went home, only once thinking of 'poor Corbane;' and then making up his mind to call, if possible, on the morrow. The morrow, however, found him as busy as on the preceding day, and the next day and the following he had to be out of town upon important business. It was Friday before he managed to go round to where the Corbanes lived, and then he found the house locked up, and all he could gather from the neighbours was that the family *had left two days before, turned out by the landlord in default of paying their rent, and that they had*

taken lodgings about a mile away from that part of the town—the exact neighbourhood no one quite knew. Mr. Mortimer was distressed in not gaining any clue to their whereabouts ; but determined to get his clerk Seymour to make inquiries, if possible, before Christmas Day, when, he thought, he would like to send them a hamper, sure that they would be glad of food, if they were as poor as their late neighbours believed them to be.

But Seymour's inquiries proved fruitless, and Mr. Mortimer became really anxious. He did not wish to lose sight of Corbane, and pity for the large and little ones made him long to help them in their sorrow.

The afternoon of Christmas Eve was closing in, cold and damp, with now and then a gentle snow falling. It was very cheerless, but the busy streets were crowded with the busy purchasers ; the children of the rich, well cloaked and furred, were moving, radiant with delight, about the toy shops ; the children of the poor, with pinched faces and eager, hungry eyes, were having their 'good time,' in watching the general bustle and the grand display of toys, and dolls, and picture-books, and the glittering pretty things that decked the Christmas trees in the large toy-shop windows. Amongst the children of the rich were *Maud and Harold Mortimer*. Papa was with

them, laughing and bright, enjoying their delight and entering into all their pleasant thoughts and plans.

They had made their purchases, and were preparing to return home, when a child's scream and the rush of passers-by to a spot not far distant, from whence the sound had come, made them stop suddenly.

'Oh, papa, *do* let us see what it is !' pleaded Maud, her cheeks growing very pale ; 'it sounded so like Kathleen's cry.'

'We will go nearer and ask what it is,' said Mr. Mortimer kindly, sympathising with Maud's eagerness, 'or stay,' he added, after a moment's consideration, 'you and Harold stop here a minute, and I will go,' and Mr. Mortimer walked away quickly, to the spot from whence the cry had come.

'She is more frightened than hurt, I think,' a lady was saying as Mr. Mortimer came up. The lady was stooping down and had a child resting against her knee. Mr. Mortimer gathered from one of the lookers-on that the little girl had been knocked down by a baker's cart as she was leisurely crossing the road.

'Who's child is it ?' asked Mr. Mortimer. 'What is your name, dear ?' he said, gently taking her hand *in his*.

The little girl was still trembling and nervous, and

did not seem to care to speak, but, after a little coaxing, her lips parted, and in a whisper only audible to those who stood quite near, she said,—

‘I’s use to be Totty, please, but I’s only “poor little me” now.’ And the child heaved a weary sigh, as if though so young she had known something of sorrow.

‘Well, Totty, or “poor little me,” what other name have you?’ asked Mr. Mortimer, touched by the plaintive tone and sorrowful look of the little girl.

Totty shook her head. ‘Mamma calls me “pet,” and papa says “chickabiddy,” when he’s very kind ; but I’s little me, poor little me, and nothing else.’

‘Send her to the police station,’ suggested one of the crowd ; ‘she’ll soon be claimed, if she belongs to them as wants her. She’s strayed away somewhere, maybe.’

‘Mamma’s sick,’ said Totty, as if she considered herself called upon to make the statement ; ‘and I’s not to make a noise, it makes her headache bad.’

‘Cannot you tell me where you live?’ asked Mr. Mortimer, looking puzzled. Totty’s simplicity and gentle way of speaking were such a contrast to the noisy voices and rough manners of the little crowd which had gathered round her, that Mr. Mortimer longed to take her bodily away. He thought too of *his well-cared-for* little girls at home, and his fatherly

heart was moved with compassion for this one, evidently not too well cared for, as shown by her torn dress and dirty face.

'Us lives with Mrs. Brown, who makes butter sweeties,' said Totty, in answer to Mr. Mortimer's question. 'She's got nice pussy, too; but no like little kitten we left at home, when we came away.'

'Will you take me to Mrs. Brown's?' said Mr. Mortimer, thinking matters were assuming a more hopeful form. He was anxious, too, to see if Totty were unhurt, for as yet she had not moved from the lady's side, against which she still was leaning.

Totty got up and looked all round, as if to see exactly where she was. No limbs were broken or damage done, for she moved freely and naturally. So far Mr. Mortimer's mind was greatly relieved; but where did she live?—would she remember? It must be some distance away, as no one in the little crowd could say whose child she was.

'Poor little me doesn't know where me lives now,' she said at length, looking up piteously into Mr. Mortimer's face. 'Totty quite forgets,' she added, as if pleading an excuse; 'us not been there much time.'

A thought seemed to seize Mr. Mortimer: if the *new home* were difficult to find, at least the child

might know something of where she had lived previously, supposing it to be in the same town.

‘Will Totty take me to old home?’ said Mr. Mortimer, suiting his tone and words to the child’s understanding.

Totty looked round again, all round, as if to make quite sure of her whereabouts. Suddenly her eye lighted up.

‘Totty show you,’ she said, running forward with a bound. Mr. Mortimer followed quickly; he had not forgotten Maud and Harold, but seeing one of his clerks amongst the crowd, he had hastily asked him to go to the children and see them safely home.

Totty ran for some little distance, turning round from time to time to make quite sure that Mr. Mortimer was following her. Then there was another pause, and Totty put her little hands into her eyes and began to cry; she had altogether mistaken her way, and was, in truth, getting further from the old home than nearer to it.

Mr. Mortimer was trying to comfort the child by holding her hand, and assuring her she should be taken care of until ‘mamma’ or ‘papa’ came for her, when a woman went by who stopped and eyed the *child with more than passing curiosity.*

‘Do you happen to know whose little girl this is?’ asked Mr. Mortimer.

‘I’m much mistaken if it ain’t little Totty Corbane, that used to live in William Street. It’s like the child, only she’s grown thin, and looks neglected; and her mother always kept her nice. Come, Totty—are you Totty Corbane?’ and the woman, not unkindly, turned up Totty’s face to get a better view of it.

‘Mamma is Mrs. Torbane,’ said Totty; ‘I’s nothing but little Totty.’

‘Oh, sir! she’s her, I thought her was;’ and the woman nodded her head triumphantly. ‘Poor little thing! she’s one of the nicest mothers that ever trod shoe-leather, but one of the cruelest fathers when he’s in drink—which is pretty often, I’m told—that child ever had. He used to be such a nice gentleman once, till he took up with bad company—young fellows who were fond of smoking and drinking and card-playing; no harm in them, you know, sir, but reckless-like and go-a-head sort of chaps! I’ve lost sight of the family for a good bit now, ’cause we live over against the water since my master’s gone to Hutton’s Mill to work; but I always feltg rievous for the poor wife; *she’s had a mint of trouble, and been so patient-like, and taught the children to pray for their pa,*

and kept herself to herself, as is my principle of doing.'

Much of this was said in a confidential whisper, above Totty's head, with sundry nods and meaning glances, such as people use when talking confidentially; the eyes occasionally closed, nose wrinkled up, and lips pressed tightly together.

Mr. Mortimer was almost amused with the woman's earnestness. Time with him was precious, or he would have encouraged her to continue her oration; but as it was, just as she paused to take breath—she was a very stout woman, and somewhat asthmatical—he interrupted by asking,—

'Do you know where Mrs. Corbane lives now?'

'Bless your life, no, sir,' said the woman, and with the force of one wound up for a long speech, she rattled on with various explanations and parentheses, 'why she did know this, and didn't know that,' 'how it happened that she'd heard this much, and hadn't heard that much.'

Mr. Mortimer gathered from it all that Mrs. Corbane had left William Street under pressure for rent; had been confined to her bed at the time of her flitting; that the landlord, like all landlords, was supposed to be hard-hearted; that the family had *probably gone* to some low lodgings, where no one

would know them, and where they would have but little to pay ;—which said information left him just about as wise as before.

Mr. Mortimer thanked the good woman for her kind efforts to enlighten him, gave her his card, asking her to send him word if she learned more about the Corbanes' present lodgings that evening, and taking Totty's hand he walked briskly on. The snow was falling, and Mr. Mortimer was anxious to safely house the little wanderer ; he began to picture Maud's delight and Kathleen's wonderment when he took the little stranger up to the nursery (as he intended doing), and suggested he had brought them a Christmas present of a rare species. But Mr. Mortimer's little plans were doomed to disappointment. Suddenly, as they were turning out of a crowded thoroughfare within three minutes' walk of his house, Totty stopped and clutched his hand tightly.

'There he is !' she said, her voice full of excitement, the colour in her cheeks coming and going rapidly ; 'Totty 'll get him to come home, that's why I's come away from mamma, to find papa !' and before Mr. Mortimer could stop the little thing, she had slipped her hand out of his, and glided away in the distance.

Mr. Mortimer hastened after her. She had caught



'Papa, come home with Totty.'—Page 99.



up a tall man, dressed in black clothes, and was gently pulling at his coat, but the man—whom Mr. Mortimer at once recognised as Stephen Corbane—took no notice of the child, but hurried into the easily-opened door of a brilliantly-lighted gin-palace. Mr. Mortimer felt a little awkward. He was so well known everywhere; he felt a little shy of making himself conspicuous by following Totty into this public house. Most likely there would be a scene of some kind; he had better wait outside.

In the meantime Totty went up to her father, who had thrown himself down on a bench and settled himself as if for a good stay, in quarters both warm and comfortable. He looked surprised to see Totty, then turned away as if he did not notice her. Totty, quite undaunted, went closer to him, and put her little hand upon his knee. Aroused by this mute appeal, he stroked the curly little head, patted the child's cheek, and finally took her up in his arms and called her his 'beauty;' kissing her again and again.

'Papa, come home with Totty,' said the little girl eagerly. 'Mamma's wanted papa all day: her headache very bad. New baby has gone right away. Mrs. Brown locked baby up somewhere, and it never cried.'

Corbane laughed at his child's words, continued to

stroke her curly head, then turned her face up towards him and gave a searching look into the deep blue eyes.

'Isn't Totty frightened of her naughty papa?' he asked in a low tone.

'No; I's not frightened *now*,' said Totty in a hushed voice. 'I loves you very, *very* much, I do, I do. I always loves you, and so does mamma and all of us. It's the bad drink that we hate, it is!'

'Look here, landlord,' called Corbane to a stout man who was standing some little distance off, talking to some customers; 'don't you think a man's a brute to come and spend his time in here while he's got four little cherubs at home who are pining for the want of his society?'

'That's best known to yourself,' said the landlord, tersely; 'I don't happen to have any little cherubs. My idea of them is that there's more peace and comfort without them than with them; they're generally brawling, or fighting, or something.'

'Papa, *do* come; *please* come,' whispered Totty, pulling her father's hand with all her little strength.

'But tell me, landlord,' said Corbane, not heeding Totty's pleading looks and actions—he was in a talking mood, and meant to have his say out—'if you *did* happen to have half-a-dozen little cherubs at home,

and a gentle, loving wife—oh! my wife is such a love!’ he said, pausing and flourishing his arms about, as drunken men are apt to do, as if addressing a large audience, when there may be but one listener; ‘but now, suppose you worked hard for these little ones to make them comfortable, and respectable, and—and—what was I saying? Oh! I know! Suppose, after all, you didn’t spend the money on the children, but went and gave it to another man to make *his* home comfortable, and *his* children tidy and respectable, while you left your own to want, you’d think it a bit hard, landlord, wouldn’t you? I mean—let’s see, what do I mean?—oh! I know! I mean if you were the wife, don’t I?’

‘Come, have a glass of grog and give up arguing,’ said the landlord, moving very uncomfortably; ‘what is it to be?’

Before Corbane could answer, Mr. Mortimer, who had been waiting outside, expecting Totty every minute to return, opened the door and looked in. He went up quietly to Corbane, who was sitting with his back to the entrance, and put his hand kindly upon his shoulder.

Corbane started, and coloured deeply as he saw one of the firm from whose employ he had, only a *few days before*, been finally dismissed.

'I want a word with you outside,' said Mr. Mortimer, kindly ; 'your little girl and I have been making friends with each other, and I want to take her home, if you will tell me where she lives.'

Corbane got up and looked as if dazed. Mr. Mortimer slipped his hand within his arm and led him away. Totty ran before, and pushed open the door.

'Now,' said Mr. Mortimer, when they had reached the street, 'if you will come a step or two with me I should like to order a few trifles for your wife and children as a Christmas present. Perhaps you have not ordered your beef and plum-pudding yet? Let us cross to the butcher's yonder.'

Corbane was very silent ; he was altogether awed by Mr. Mortimer's conduct. The beef was very quickly bought.

'What address?' asked Mr. Mortimer, looking at Corbane.

'Upon my life, sir, I hardly know,' said Corbane, looking puzzled, and striking his forehead with his hand.

'Your little girl was telling me you were living at a Mrs. Brown's,' suggested Mr. Mortimer, hoping to *assist his memory*.

'Yes, yes ; I remember now,' said Corbane, hastily.

'Mrs. Brown, No. 89, Dunker's Street—it's up by the foundry, somewhere.'

'Dunker's Street, off Town Hall Place,' suggested the butcher, in business tones; 'quite right, sir, quite right; send it at once, sir. Some suet would you like, sir, for a pudding? Or a fine goose? Just a dozen left; sold fifty since the morning. Not to-night, sir? thank you, sir, thank you; good evening, sir, much obliged to you!' and the busy butcher turned round to a group of customers who were waiting to be served.

Mr. Mortimer had learnt what he wanted to know—the Corbanes' address—but something urged him to take Corbane straight home, and see him safely housed, as well as little Totty. He walked on quietly in the direction, still with his hand within Corbane's arm. He talked about the chilly night, the gay shop-windows, Christmas-time, how busy it made people—anything to keep Corbane moving, and unsuspecting of being in any special custody. The distance was not very great, but the progress was but slow, as Totty seemed anxious to look into the shop-windows. Once Corbane felt in his pocket for some money, with which to purchase the child a doll she had taken a great fancy to. He brought out a handful of coppers, *but found no silver amongst them.* Mr. Mortimer

quietly placed half-a-crown upon the top of the coppers, saying,—

‘Go in and buy something for the little ones at home.’

‘Do, papa, *do*,’ said Totty, clapping her hands. Corbane and Totty went into the shop, Mr. Mortimer waited outside.

‘Ah! buying Christmas presents for the little people! Where’s Miss Maud, that she’s not making her own selection? I thought that was to be the order of the day,’ and Dr. Barrie, who was passing, shook hands warmly with Mr. Mortimer.

Mr. Mortimer explained that his own purchases had been made an hour or two ago; then, drawing the doctor aside, he told him he was a private detective marching a runaway husband off home to a sick wife.

‘Which way are you going?’ asked the doctor much interested.

‘Oh! it’s poor Corbane, one of our own clerks. Elliot—who has taken him in hand lately—turned him off last week. We can’t get regular work out of him; he is one of the drink’s captives. He’s turned out of his old home, and has gone, I find, to some miserable quarters in Dunker’s Street!’

‘Dunker’s Street,’ said the Doctor; ‘do you happen to know what number?’

‘Yes ; No. 89,’ answered Mr. Mortimer.

‘How very singular!’ said the doctor ; ‘I am on my way now to see the poor wife ; she’s a patient of mine, and it’s a chance if we find her alive ; I saw her an hour or two ago, and she seemed then at death’s door.’

‘Well, it certainly is strange that we should both be bound the same way,’ said Mr. Mortimer ; ‘if you can spare a moment till Corbane makes his appearance, we may as well all go together. I am sorry to hear such accounts of the poor wife ; I had no idea she was in such imminent danger, or I would not have encouraged all this loitering ; and Mr. Mortimer looked somewhat anxiously towards the shop where Corbane and Totty were making their purchases. Before long they both came out, and all of them at once started briskly for Dunker’s Street.

CHAPTER IV.

ABOUT the same time that Mr. Mortimer was trying to find out little Totty’s name and *home*, a group of women were gathered in the room

of one who was dying, watching the laboured breathing and unconscious movements of the poor sufferer.

‘I’ll look round again later,’ said the doctor, as he left the room. Calling one of the women aside, he asked her in a low voice, what she knew ‘of the poor young creature yonder?’

‘Next to nothing, sir,’ was the reply. ‘She came in this street with her children it may be ten days ago. She was turned out of a tidy, comfortable home, I heard a neighbour say, because she couldn’t pay the rent. Her husband—he’s a fine-looking man, and has been a gentleman, I’m told, until he took to drinking, and that’s been the ruin of him, as it’s been the ruin of nine-tenths of the husbands who live down here. They call this Dunker’s Street, after Lawyer Dunker, who built the nine top houses; they might have called it Drunkard’s Street while they *was* about it, for of all the places—’

‘But can you not tell me more of this poor woman’s history?’ interrupted the doctor, looking at his watch.

‘Well, sir, I was coming to the main point. She’d been here a day or two, and seemed very quiet and bad—we wanted to send for you then, but she wouldn’t hear tell of it; she said she’d be stronger after a bit; *the baby was* but ten days old and so on. But on *the Saturday night*, as she came in on the *Wednesday*

or Thursday, there was a great to-do betwixt eleven and twelve o'clock in this 'ere street. We're used to drunken brawls, and don't take much account of them; but there was some of the awfuldest yells as ever you heard, and us all rushed out to see what was going on. You doctor gentlemen know a little of our trials—I say *ours*, for my master's as bad as any on 'em—or you'd scarcely credit what I'm going to tell you. Do you know that brute of a husband took the poor creature by the hair of her head—he was mad drunk, of course—and dragged her out of bed, down-stairs, into the middle of the street, and there he left her with the children, pretty creatures! in their night-gowns and bare feet, all a-crying round her!

'But did no one interfere?' exclaimed Dr. Barrie, the tears springing to his eyes.

'Bless your life, sir, no; we're too much used to that sort of thing to risk our heads being broken for nothing. The police came up when it was all over; they'd been busy over a similar job in Always Court, yonder. Mrs. Brown took the poor thing in, and there she's been ever since!'

'And what became of the husband?' inquired the doctor, moving a step nearer the street door.

'It wasn't *my* business to ask,' said the woman *curtly*. 'The more he makes himself scarce the better

just now. He'll be in one of the publics, like enough, drinking himself a bit madder, and then he'll have the *dilrum-tremuns* and be awful for a bit ; and as gentle as a lamb when that's over, and, for all I know, as penitent as penitent. He don't look like a bad sort, only he's mad when the drink's in him. I wish I was one of those gentlemen as goes to *Parlyment*, I'd make a law that every public had its own madhouse, so that the folks as sold the drink might look after their own patients, and not make the poor innocent wives do their dirty work !

'Ay, and I'd do a thing more than that,' continued the woman, growing eloquent in her wrath. 'I'd make a law that them that made the drink, and them that sold it, should be made to spend so many hours a week in the drunkards' homes. I'd soon give them a sickener for their trade, I bet a penny ! They've got soft hearts as well as most on us, and if they only *saw* the ruin and misery they'd helped to make, they'd not be so crazy to get fortunes for their own children out of other folks' flesh and blood, for *that's* what it comes to, neither more nor less ! I ain't one to think all bad of publicans and such folks. I had an uncle in the trade, but he give it up ; he said his conscience *wouldn't* stand it ; he'd might as well have "licensed *to murder men and women's soul's*" put on his sign-

board, as "licensed to sell drink on the premises;" for, do what he could, he knowed it led to that with a many! I know there'd be a many more do as he did, if they'd only think seriously a bit. But, oh! there's an awful reckoning-up in store at Judgment-day, I guess, for some. Talk of forgerers, and murderers, and such like! How *can* them folks feel who's caused the death, and misery, worse than death, of hundreds? They'll never think to look their Maker straight in the face, and tell *Him* they're quite innocent of wrong, they'd nothing to do with what came of it, it was all one with other trades, they'd got their living to make—as a brewer my John worked under once told me, when I took the lad clean away, and said I'd rather bind him 'prentice to the Evil One outright, as let him be learning to do work for the devil, and call it honest trading! They won't say, as *that* man says to me: "My good woman, you're like all your sexes, most *opsurd* and intolerable! Who built that mission-room for the Bank Street poor-folk? Who gave the money for the new church clock when old 'un was wore out? Who sends Sunday-school children to seaside in summer, and gives treats to workhouse folks? Who, but me? If I gets folks' money *inreasonably*, I makes good use of it, so *there!* If man's to get according to his works in

Judgment-day, I ain't afraid of my rewards!" Ah, it's all very well, but let him say that to Him as reads hearts and weighs motives, and he'll find out his mistake, or I'm not a woman!' and the speaker nodded her head significantly.

It must not be imagined for a minute that Dr. Barrie had stood complacently to listen to Mrs. Loburn's harangue. He had shown great signs of impatience, and moved step by step nearer the street-door, then out and into his brougham, before Mrs. Loburn had reached the end of her speech, which was jerked out hurriedly, as if her life depended upon it.

Had the doctor the time he might have waited to take her to task for her harsh view of individuals he himself believed to be quite innocent in the main, though possibly, indirectly, the instigators of much trouble. And yet as he visited first one patient and then another that afternoon in the low courts of the town, finding here a pinched and wasted form—a child in years, but an old man in features—and there a sickly wife with a shadow on her face that told of a broken heart within; or poverty and wretchedness where plenty should abound, and knew by instinct that all this was traceable to drink, he felt that Mrs. *Loburn* was justified in much that she had said. At the same time, with wider views and larger judgment,

he went more deeply into the subject, while pondering over it, and grieved to think how little a Christian country and a Christian people weighed the awful responsibility of allowing and sanctioning the existence and growth of that which must surely be an abomination to Him who hateth, Solomon tells us, together with the 'lying tongue' and 'proud look,' 'hands that shed innocent blood,' and 'he that soweth discord among brethren.'

In the meantime the women still watched by the sick-bed, talking in hushed whispers. 'Poor thing! and never a mother to watch by her! and him as should be father, and mother, and everything to her, away no one knows where!' 'The Lord's very merciful to make her unconscious-like; she's not asked about her children since morning. It's a blessing the babe's taken, she'll have something to comfort her a bit up in heaven!'

'Will papa be hanged?' asked a child's voice, as an anxious little face peeped out from behind the curtain. The women did not know the child was there: she must have stolen in during the doctor's visit.

'Hanged, my pretty, what for?' said one in softened tones; she had six little ones at home, and she felt strongly for these suffering children of the poor *sick woman*.

'They said papa was killing mamma by inches,' said the little girl, 'and I thought the queen had murderers hanged.'

'Ay, child,' answered an old woman quickly, 'but it all depends how the thing's done. Some murderers the law looks pretty sharp after, but some it encourages all in its power. If a man kills wife or child outright, and it only takes him a few minutes in doing, well, him the law is down upon, and sure enough they'll hang him if they catch him; but them as goes to work by bits—by breaking hearts, starving, knocking about, and kicking like a brute—the law takes no account of such; it rather helps them to do the deadly work by making it easy for them to get that which trains them up to it. Yes,' continued the woman angrily, 'and as if they couldn't be satisfied without helping women to be brutes too, they've laid snares on every side to trap *us*! If it's bread we want for the children, there's beer that can be got along with it, and no one need be the wiser. If it's tea and sugar we go to buy, there's beer staring us in the face, and wines that'll fit so nicely in our market basket. If it's vegetables we want, there's beer we can have in place of the odd coppers change. Oh, it's cruel! it's brutal! We know the curse of going to a public—our masters have taken the trouble to

teach us *that*—and we took care to steer clear of *them* ; but when we find the drink at every corner in our shopping, it's more than flesh and blood can stand, as my Agnes knows to her cost, and Jim Taylor's wife, and a score of others—present company *of course* excepted '—added the old woman with a chuckle.

Just then there was a movement at the door : the women all turned in that direction, and greeted the new comer with smiles of unfeigned pleasure.

'Come in, Miss Corbette ; she's much as she was when you left this morning, poor dear ! The doctor thinks she can't last many hours.'

The new comer was a young lady between twenty and thirty, sweet and gentle in appearance, with a smile that seemed like a ray of sunlight in that darkened room. She nodded kindly to the right and left, then went up to the bedside. All made way for her as if by instinct. She bent down gently over the unconscious woman, then lightly touched her forehead and felt her pulse. Up to this time she had not spoken ; now she turned round to the women and said,—

'Will some one bring me a little water in a cup or glass ? See, I have brought a few flowers ; they will be so sweet for her to see if consciousness returns.

They will tell her better than we can of the heavenly Father's love and thought for her. It is hard to understand that He is with us when we are in the very midst of dark care and bitter trouble, as this poor creature is, but it is true, all *quite* true, nevertheless, and it should comfort and rest us *so* much to know it.'

'Bless you for saying that!' said an old woman from the other side of the bed. 'We need them bright thoughts in this dark world of wickedness.'

'It's dark and wicked,' said Miss Corbette gently—her voice was very soft and clear—'because we make it so by our forgetfulness of God and by our evil deeds. It would be all light and bright if we only knew and thought about Him. If you keep the blinds down and the shutters closely to, you keep out the light, and, though the sun may shine most brightly, it does not reach you in your darkened room. If you close your hearts and minds to God, and will not let Him shine upon you, if you forget to pray to Him, and love to gossip and quarrel with your neighbours, neglect your homes so that your husbands naturally seek their quiet and comfort in a public-house; if you let your children go wild, and are thriftless and slovenly, or love the drink which makes you cruel and hard—*then all is dark*, so dark to you! God is shining

there, near you and all around you, but you cannot see and feel and know Him. It is your own fault, not His ; your own sought-for suffering.'

There was a muffled sob from a woman who stood half hidden by the curtain, as Miss Corbette paused. She had a bloated face and red-tipped nose. She was well known in the neighbourhood as a drunkard. The sob came from a heart that really longed for better things, the longing awakened by the gentle visitor, whose constant presence in that dark neighbourhood was as the shining of a light which stole through the crevices of darker hearts and minds, and often awoke the cry, ' More light, more light ! '

Oh ! why is there not more visiting of this kind in the darkened homes of our land ? Why are the out-cast and the desolate to be left to die unsought, unwon, when a little contact with the pure and good, a touch from hands which are strong in their grasp of God's hand, would be as a mighty power to raise them from their degradation, and to lead them gently upwards towards a higher, better life !

Miss Corbette continued to talk while arranging her flowers in the broken cup which one of the women had brought her. This done, she sat down at the corner of the bed and sang, in soft, full tones—so *distinctly* that each word was heard—the little hymn

'I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto Me and rest :
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down,
Thy head upon my breast."
I came to Jesus as I was—
Weary, and worn, and sad ;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Behold, I freely give
The living water ; thirsty one,
Stoop down, and drink, and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream ;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"I am this dark world's Light ;
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,
And all thy day be bright."
I looked to Jesus, and I found
In Him my star, my sun ;
And in that light of life I'll walk
Till travelling days are done.'

The unconscious form on the bed moved once or twice while Miss Corbette sang ; then, as the voice gradually died away into silence, at the close of the last verse, the dying woman opened her eyes and *looked around her* ; then she spoke, not feebly but *strongly and clearly*, as dying people often speak,—

‘It’s all that—rest, water, light! Yes; He giveth freely and richly to enjoy.’

Then the wife spoke in hushed tones of him—her husband—whom she loved in spite of all. ‘Tell him, oh, tell him, that his Clara loves him. Don’t let him think he’s killed me. He has a tender heart, the lad! and but for the cruel drink he’d be a noble fellow. He loves his children, though he’s been so harsh at times. Who’ll teach them, when I’m gone, to love their father? Oh! some one tell them what has been his ruin! Let them loathe and hate the drink, but let them learn to love their father for himself.’

And thus the poor woman rambled on: at times apparently conscious, then far away, her voice sounding strange and distant.

Suddenly she changed her tone. What was soft before was now wild and loud.

‘Stephen! Stephen! spare me; do not kill me. For the children’s sake, oh! let me live. Tear my hair; trample on me; give me bruises black and blue; break my heart—I’ll still love you, and know that it is the hateful drink that makes you thus! Oh! don’t touch it husband, it’s poison, it will make you mad, quite mad! You don’t know what you are when *that* is in you. Keep away from those death haunts, I say; think of your innocent children;

think of your poor Clara—Stephen, my own husband!’

The dying woman raised herself up in bed, and looked with staring eyes towards the door, extending her arms wildly. The weeping ones around gazed on in awe. They thought it was the last struggle, that the dying wife was still wandering; but, as they followed her look towards the half-shut door, they saw a crouching figure. The eyes were fixed, the lips were ashy pale. It was only a brief second, then the figure rose to its full height and sprang into the room, and clasped the dying woman in its arms.

Yes! it was Stephen, sobered by the shock of realising for the first time that Clara was dying. Miss Corbette withdrew from the room, and beckoned to the women to follow. On the threshold of the door she met Mr. Mortimer and Dr. Barrie, with little Totty following closely. She drew them aside to tell them what had happened.

‘We’ve heard it partly,’ said Mr. Mortimer, in a voice husky and tearful. ‘Her husband heard her talking as we passed beneath the window—we were bringing him home to her—and we all paused. If this doesn’t make a sober man of Corbane, he’s not *got a spark of the nobility about him that his wife gives him credit for.*’

‘If I mistake not,’ said the doctor, gently, ‘this is a case that will need great help : example and encouragement from those he can respect. I can scarcely flatter myself that my influence would be much with him, if any ; but, God helping me, I’ll act as though it were *everything* !’

Mr. Mortimer looked up as if to question further.

‘I mean this,’ said the doctor, in answer to the look ; ‘I’ll profit by the lessons learnt to-day, by other bedsides than the one in yonder room ; I’ll give no countenance or tacit sanction to that which everywhere I find to be murdering home life and peace. I have boys of my own. What guarantee have I that they may not become as this young man, whose home I find to have been as good as my lads have ? At least, they shall not be able to plead that their father ever sanctioned the habitual use of that which maddens some and murders others ! Miss Corbette, Mr. Mortimer, you women yonder, all are witnesses I pledge my word to-night from henceforth to be a foe to drink. I’ll set my foot down ! firmly upon social customs and moderate views, and rejoice to be accounted narrow, bigoted, and one-sided, if my example and influence shall lead my boys to shun the shoals and quicksands of a life founded upon (*so-called*) broad principles, or help a poor Corbane to

fight with manly courage against a besetting weakness !’

The doctor had spoken quietly, though very earnestly. Miss Corbette smiled upon him through her tears. Mr. Mortimer looked strangely moved, but did not speak. Little Totty slipped by them, and crept noiselessly into her mother’s room. Her father was kneeling by the bedside, his head buried in his hands. The dying woman lay back upon her pillows, looking calm and happy. She beckoned Totty to come near to her, then whispered softly,—

‘Totty, be good and kind to poor papa, and always pray for him and love him, will you?’

‘Yes, mamma, yes,’ said Totty, kissing her mother’s hand, as she would often do in a gentle, loving little way. ‘I’s so glad papa’s going to be good. Totty always loved papa, but never quite like now;’ and the child stole her hand softly over her father’s bent head. ‘I’s happy little Totty again, mamma,’ she added softly; ‘I’s only “poor little me” when you cry and papa is naughty.’

‘God bless my child — my children!’ said the mother, softly; then she asked Totty to run and fetch Helen and Tommy to her; strangely enough *she never named* the babe, though the women *thought she was still* unconscious of its death.

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‘Promise, husband ! I am going, oh, let me take your promise with me !’ and Clara looked pleadingly into the eyes of her husband as he bent fondly over her. The doctor and Mr. Mortimer were in the room, but some distance from the bed. Miss Corbette had left some little time before, taking with her Helen and Tommy. Totty was to go home with Mr. Mortimer later.

Stephen Corbane was too tearful to reply at once to his wife’s pleading. Mr. Mortimer thought he was hesitating, and gently drew near.

‘Stephen, my boy,’ said he, with fatherly kindness, ‘I have long done you an injury by not seeking more actively to help you to throw off your habits of intemperance. I know I’ve spoken to you upon the subject, but I feel now how strengthless my arguments while I continued to make use of, and enjoy, the stimulants I urged your giving up. Now, listen : I and my friend, the doctor, would like to help you, and defend ourselves—for who knows how we ourselves might some day be tempted to excess ? Give us your hand, and let us all together promise, by God’s help, from this night to abstain from all that is intoxicating.’

‘Oh, sir, you are too kind !’ sobbed poor Corbane, *as greatly touched as surprised at what he heard.*

Clara did not speak, but she looked from one to the other—from Mr. Mortimer to the doctor, and then towards her husband—with a look of unearthly joy and wonder.

There was silence in the room, broken by the distant carol of the Christmas singers.

‘Peace and good-will,’ said Clara softly. ‘Yes! trouble and turmoil once, but peace and good-will now! Peace, such peace! Husband, *He* gave me peace in the midst of sorrow—He’ll give you strength in the midst of temptation. Seek Him—seek Him—trust Him. Peace—peace—and good-will.’

Another silence, broken by prayer, as the doctor knelt and commended the spirit passing away to Him who is the God of Love, the Prince of Peace, the Comforter Divine.

Did the husband keep the promise made to his wife on her death-bed? Was it merely sentiment and excited feeling that led the doctor and the lawyer to make a vow of total abstinence that Christmas Eve?

Very natural questions, reader. Perhaps the story would never have been told had there been no answer forthcoming. You would like to know more than I *am empowered* to tell you; but of this make sure—*those Christmas Eve promises have been faithfully*

kept ; the strong have helped the weak ; the weak have given strength to the strong, by inspiring them with new thoughts, new powers, new influences. There will be many Stephen Corbanes who will read this little story, many Mr. Mortimers and Dr. Barries. I can think, as I write, of many homes, once sorrowful and cursed with drink, made happy and prosperous by the gentle influence of Christ-like lives which, as by His command, 'Peace be still,' have silenced the tumult of passion and the storms of sin. With these blessed memories in my heart, I close my little sketch in words the Master uttered as a guiding principle to every life—

'GO AND DO THOU LIKEWISE !'



WHAT JOE WORTHY THOUGHT

OF THE

·BRITISH WORKMAN·

THINK of it, man? Why it's the best thing going! Just you consider a bit, *see* what a blessing it is to such as me. There's scarcely a day gone by in the last fifteen years but *I've* spent my hour or so every night at a public house, and no disrespect to my home neither, nor to my missis, who's one of the right sort, and works early and late to make things tidy and comfortable, and has mostly a smiling face when one comes home, instead of the fretful, careworn look half the women have as are idle and giddy, and can never make two ends meet! Bless me! why it would drive me mad in no time! A man wants rest and comfort when he comes home after a hard day's work, not a fretful wife to go teasing him about this and that; it's *that* as drives *men* to find a home at the public house, and gets *them* into drinking ways, if the wives did but know it!

‘But what was I saying? Oh, I know, I was saying how I always went into the public house for a chat after the day’s work was done. I like my chat and pipe along with one or two others as well as any man, and there was nowhere else to go, and so, of course, I went to the public. Didn’t I get into drinking ways? Well, I won’t say I didn’t, though I never thought to the first start off; but somehow—I don’t mind telling you now, though I couldn’t speak of it for many a day once—when I got along with Will Turpin and Jim Osborne, I somehow did slip into bad ways; they would drink a deal, and chaffed me when I stopped short after my two pints. I couldn’t stand their jokes, and so, like a fool and coward, used to order more beer, until, in time, I didn’t think much of having my eight or ten pints a night, sometimes more.

‘Wonder how I could do it? So do I, but I *did* it, and my poor old girl at home came off on the short, until it got sometimes to having nothing at all in the house to eat by the end of the week, and the poor children—well, their shoes wore out, and there was no money to buy new ones, to say nothing of their other clothing; and they were obliged to stay away from school, and then, of course, they got wild and unmanageable, and there was no doing nothing *at all with them*. Then we got behindhand with our

rent, and had to turn out of the snug little cottage we'd lived in ever since we were married. That was a bad business! My poor old missis didn't hold her head up for many a day after that.

'Well, but I was going to tell you. I felt how cruel I was to go on so, always spending the wife's bread and the children's shoes in drink! I used to think I'd give it up, but somehow I couldn't. Bad habits are quicker found than got rid of. I don't know what would have been the end of it all, if I hadn't been brought to my senses. There! it's eight years full ago, and yet I can't help crying whenever I think of it!

'Well, you know, Jim, I had a pet child, as sweet a little lassie as ever sat on mother's knee. When I got into my drinking ways, Annie—that was her name—was four years old, and sometimes in the summer she would start off on her own account, right out of the garden and over the brook (there was a very rickety old bridge over it, but somehow the children never came to any harm), up to the "Red Lion," and putting her little head in the Tap she would say, 'Daddy, come home along with Annie, *do*.' I mostly got up and went home, there and then. I couldn't resist the little darling, with her pretty ways and gentle tones; but one night—

it's awful to think of—I had had more than usual when she came for me, and instead of going, I spoke sharp, and told her to be off home. She looked very sorrowful like, and said, 'Oh, daddy, *do* come, mammy's waiting supper, come with little Annie.' I think I would have gone then, she looked so sweet and pleading, only Will Turpin laughed, and that made me angry; so, instead of going, I boxed the child's ears, and turned her out, and shut the door in a passion. I was sorry for it afterwards, but didn't like to appear so, I was afraid of Will Turpin's laugh. (What fools we are, to chuckle to the Evil One so, for after all, it's him as does it, he knows he's safe on us if he can arouse our bad passions!)

'I sat very uncomfortable for half-an-hour, and then I went—longing to kiss my little Annie—and tell her I was sorry I had hit her. I got as far as the bridge, and then—I can see it all now—I stopped in agony, there—there, lying all in a heap, was my little Annie! She had fallen into the brook head foremost, and—well, well, she was drowned. My beautiful darling, father's own pet and guardian angel, was dead! The wife thought she was still along with me, as I had never failed to come home with her when she came to fetch me.

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‘Well, after that night I never went nigh the “Red Lion” again. I took to the “Pembroke Arms,” and I made a vow I’d never go beyond my pint at one sitting; but . . . what’s the use of making such like vows, when all the time one is running right into the midst of temptations? You might as well say you wouldn’t catch the typhus fever, no that you wouldn’t, although you were along with one who had it, and were breathing bad air and running every risk a fellow could run. I went to the “Pembroke Arms” time after time, and but for the thought of my wee birdie up in heaven, whose little voice seemed ever singing to me when I got the drink before me and was getting a bit reckless, “Daddy, come home; daddy, come home, *do*,” I think I’d have got as bad as ever in my old ways.

‘My poor old girl at home fretted so after the child, and grew so ailing and bad, that my heart was torn two ways. I began to think more than ever, and look ye here, this is what I thought: it’s *no* use, half measures won’t do, if I’m going to be a steady man, and turn over a new leaf, I’ll have to give up the drink *entirely*. So one day says I to my Pol, it was a Saturday night, and I’d come along home as *straight as an arrow* after master paid us,—oh! my! *what a struggle* I had not to turn into the “Pembroke

Arms" for a bit; *didn't* some of the men shout after me; ay, Bill Smith—him as got drowned two summers ago, when he were walking home drunk by the canal—how he teased me to go halves in a quart; poor Bill Smith! Ah! what a nice lad he was; good father, too, but his mother spoilt him! Why, I've seen her give Bill his drops of beer when he wasn't much more than a babe, and when he were ten years old he had his glass regular every dinner time—of course when he grew bigger he didn't stop at his one glass; his poor mother begged and prayed on him to give up the drink when he were turned twenty, and she saw the sad havoc it was making with him; but what was the use then? He had got a taste for it when little more than a baby, and his mother didn't teach him there were harm in it *then*, how could she expect he'd turn from it all at once afterwards? Ah! if we'd only had a Band of Hope in those days, and Bill Smith had begun good habits early . . . Well, well, poor fellow, he's gone now, and his poor wife and bairns are in the work-house. My heart often bleeds for those innocent children, and when I think I was on the high road to bring my Pol and the bairns to the like place . . . There! it's no good going on like this, or I'll never get to the end of my story—what was I saying? Oh, I *know*, it was about the night when I went home to

my Pol and told her a bit of my thoughts,—I says to my old girl, “Pol,” says I, “how’d you like to have a teetotal husband, for I’m in two minds to make a clean sweep of it, and never touch a drop of the drink again?”

‘Well, as you may guess, my missis was glad I’d made up my mind to have no more to do with that which had been such a curse to me, and says she, then and there—my! how her face brightened; I’m sure my telling her *that* did her more good than all the medicine the doctor had been ordering for her of late—says she to me, “Joe, lad, if I’ve a teetotal husband, you shall have a teetotal wife. I can—that’s to say” (says she), “I *will* do without my half-pint on washing days”—it were the only time my Pol touched the drink, bless her! “I reckon” (says she) “a wife ought to stick by her husband in all that is good, for it stands to reason two must be stronger than one.” (You wish all wives thought the same? So do I; the poor husbands would stand a better chance then than they do now; these wives of ours have a mighty power over us if they only knew it; and if *they* stick by us through thick and thin, when we start *along a new road*, why the way is ten times easier! *We can bear a few chaffs, and a great lot of rough*

words from our old mates, when we've got our wives by our side, which would go very hard and perhaps bring us back again to old roads if they were away. Yes! if only *all* wives were like my Pol,—but then, what's the use of talking, my Pol's one in a thousand!)

'Well, the long and the short of it all was, that me and my missis gave up the drink there and then, and we've been better and happier beings ever since, as well as fifty times *healthier*, I can tell you.

'But ye see, when I left off going to the "Pembroke Arms," I wonderfully missed the company; I felt as how I'd like a cosy chat at times along with some as took a bit of interest in the going on of things, and when I heard of this "British Workman Public House" without the drink, I thought God had just put it into the hearts of some kind folks to open it in the town for the likes of me, for it just gives a man all he wants, and don't lead him into no bad ways.

'Oh! I bless the day the 'British Workman' was opened here; and *haven't* I cause to bless it, think you?

'You don't wonder at my liking it now? No, no more would anyone else, if they knew as much as you know; but I don't tell everyone—I can't. My sweet *little Annie is like a bright angel to me now. I often*

think her death has been the saving of me ; it's made me want to live a better life, and — and it's made me think a bit of the place up there—"above the bright blue sky," and some day I hope to meet my darling, and tell her all about it.

'The wife thinks quite as much of this place here as ever I do. She says, "There's many a woman will see her family better fed and clothed since the 'British Workmans' have been opened." She says, "Them as wants the company" (like me you know), "can just have it without getting into harm's way ; and them as is fond of the beer, but have a mind to give it up, will learn better notions by coming to a place where they can't get none, though there's plenty good company, and reading, and games, and such like, to entertain them, and it'll just help them on to better ways.

'There, my man, I've given you my opinion pretty freely, but there's one thing I haven't mentioned ; you see those boxes, marked "Voluntary contributions towards the support of the British Workman" ?—there's one facing when you open the door, and there's one as you come in down stairs—well, I always contrive to put a sixpence in one of them every Saturday night. I'm not one as cares to be beholden to anybody, and so I do my part to keep up the establishment, as every other British workman should do, and

not leave it for the good folks as started the place to do.

'I wouldn't have thought of naming it, but I guess you don't understand the right meaning of those two boxes—at least, I know half the chaps that come here don't—perhaps you think they're meant for the gentlefolks that come visiting the place to drop a shilling in? But they're not, they're meant for all of us, every man jack as comes here, to put something in. I heard the treasurer say one day, "Them as couldn't afford more might put in a penny, or even a halfpenny." What do you think now? the first week when he went to the box up stairs (there had been over a hundred of us in here at least that week), he only found fourpence ha'penny in the box—a fine start-off of "Voluntary Contributions"! I told our treasurer I thought it was because nobody knew about giving, and so it proved, for the next week, after it had got breezed about a bit, there were three shillings in it, I heard. I don't know what it is now, but anyhow I mean to do my duty by it, and show my gratitude to the place.

'Here, old boy, my pipe's gone out, and it's time I toddled off home; I don't like to leave my missis all by herself all the evening. I mostly reads a bit to *her while she's working*, or tell her scraps of things

I've picked up here in some of these nice books. Ah! if there had always been these "British Workman Public-Houses," my little Annie might have been here now; but there, the good God knows best; she's safe along with Him, and she's a kind of "Light in the window" for us, as that hymn talks of.

'Ah! it will be a happy day when we go to be with her there. And isn't it a blessing to know that we've all an invitation to go, and it's our own fault if we don't get there! Christ died for all. If the thought of that doesn't make us hate the drink and all bad ways, I don't know what can! I do say sometimes to my wife it was little Annie's death which led us first to think of our souls; but it's the thought of a Saviour's love which makes sin right down hateful to us. And its the texts which hang about on these wall there, that drive such thoughts straight home to one. That's my verse, over the door there as we come in—"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." And may it be yours, too, old fellow. Good night.'

'CHUBBY;'

OR,

GRAND-DAD'S DARLING.

~~~~~

**'CHUBBY!'** that was the name grandfather gave him the very moment the little bundle of white clothes (with a pink head-flannel) was put into his arms by a very old lady in a stuff gown and mop-cap.

'There! Mr. Turpond,' said the old lady with a little buzzing sound peculiar to motherly nurses, 'you never saw a finer baby in a day's march! You ought to be proud of your grandchild! Feel the weight of him, and venture to contradict me if you dare.'

Good old Mr. Turpond did as he was told. Well-disciplined grandfathers are mostly obedient. He felt the weight of his new-born grandson (very much, I am forced to admit, as he was in the habit of testing the weight of his poultry when he went to market to make purchases for his customers), then balancing the little bundle in his left hand and arm, he took the

forefinger of his right hand and gently poked some very pink little cheeks, touched some round little ears, passed the said finger over the rosy little lips, looked up quietly into the old nurse's face, and slowly and deliberately pronounced the word 'Chubby!' And that was how little Chubby came in possession of his name. His mother suggested that 'Stephen Jonathan,' being a family name, must be given to her first-born—names, like properties, being sometimes entailed—but Chubby he was, Chubby he would be, and Chubby he will doubtless remain until the end of the chapter.

Chubby grew and throve. At ten months old he took to his feet, in spite of the staunch objection on the part of all elderly ladies whom he had the honour to include amongst his friends, and who prophesied (in token of their friendship) untold evil to the little legs if allowed at so early a date to bear the weight of little Chubby's body. But Chubby had a will of his own, and his will was to walk; so Chubby scattered arguments and admonitions to the winds and ran alone, whilst some neighbouring infants, with less will and more pliancy of disposition, were only just drawing themselves up by a chair, and making an attempt to stand.

Chubby's will developed with his growth. But,

wilful or obedient, naughty or good, nothing altered the fact of Chubby being grand-dad's darling. By the time Chubby was two years old he could blow a whistle to call old Grey from the paddock to take 'father' to market in the vegetable cart; he could use a whip to father's pigs, when the portly mother and her nine babies thought well to leave their wallowing in the sty for a gentle saunter in the front garden—even pigs like change of scene, you know—he could 'ride a horse' on the paddock gate with only an occasional fall—he had never broken a leg yet—and he could dig his little fingers into mother's jam pots, and pronounce the preserves to be '*werry good, werry good.*'

Dear, laughing, wild, good-for-nothing, naughty little Chubby! Ah! how grandfather loved the boy! What prayer so often on his lips as this: 'God bless the lad.' Love begets love. No wonder Chubby loved grandfather with all the 'might and main' of his warm little wilful heart. To twine his baby arms round grandfather's neck, and peep with laughing eyes into the old man's face, saying the while, 'Chubby love grand-dad, Chubby do; ' this came as naturally to little Chubby as the first gift of his baby tongue, as it came to him 'once on a time' to climb his father's knee for 'sugar,' or help

himself, when opportunity offered, to his mother's preserves.

No wonder that little Chubby's feet were never slow to follow grandfather's; there they were from early morning until bedtime the echo of grand-dad's steps. Grand-dad was a little deaf, but he generally had ears for all Chubby's movements. There was an occasion, however, when grand-dad did *not* hear the patter of the little feet following his so closely. It was on a certain morning when he was, what he called, 'treating conscience.' To tell a little secret, grand-dad *had been* very fond of drinking in his time. I say *had been*, for since Chubby came to fill his heart with thoughts of love, and draw him nearer God and heaven, he had been wonderfully preserved from the pangs of his evil appetite. The fact was, his mind was so full of Chubby that there was no room for thoughts of self. But no earthly love is strong enough to defend the citadel of self when the enemy comes in full force to attack it. It was fair time, and grand-dad felt to long for half-an-hour in his favourite corner in the 'Nine Pins.' Chubby was, he thought, away high busy with 'father' and the pigs. So off we went, impelled by the force of an unholy *appetite*.

'*Right glad we are to see you!*' was the hearty greet-

ing from landlord Smiler ; ' come in, come in, there's your old corner all ready for you, and an old friend or two quite eager for a chat. What shall I draw you ? '

' I'll begin with a pint of bitter beer,' said grand-dad, fumbling in his waistcoat pocket for some silver.

' And Chubby take some too ! ' said a silvery little voice at grand-dad's elbow, feeling in his pinafore pocket for a farthing he had treasured up for many days ' 'gainst fair time.'

A boisterous laugh greeted little Chubby from landlord and others present ; but grand-dad had only tears at his command.

' Eh ! landlord,' he said, shaking his head sorrowfully, ' we're fools to think we're only followed by the youngsters in ways that are good ! Their lives are echoing ours in bad and good equally alike. To think I've led my Chubby's feet in the paths where my own have often strayed. Landlord, no offence, I'll pay for the beer, but I'll not drink it. Come, Chubby, lad, old grand-dad 'll follow your leadings to-day,' and taking the child's hand, the old man withdrew amidst solemn silence.

' Grand-dad, come to school with Chubby ? ' said the child the following Sunday morning ; ' we sing nice hymns and talk nice texts, and grand-dad can *sit on Chubby's form.*'



'Grand-dad's too big to go to school,' said the old man, shaking his head.

'Is grand-dad too big to go to heaven too?' asked Chubby thoughtfully.

'No, no, child—' Grand-dad got no further. He knew he was not too big as Chubby meant it, but 'The Book' said *the way was narrow, and the gate was straight*. He was too big with all his sins about him to pass through *that* gate.

Chubby waited for his answer, but as grand-dad remained silent, he said, 'Won't gentle Jesus let you in, grand-dad? He would if you were a little child just like us. Can't God make you little, grand-dad?'

'Ay, ay, Chubby, I mind there is a way of getting small enough for heaven;' and the old man knocked his stick upon the ground, while the tears trickled slowly down his cheeks.

The school bell rang, and Chubby hastened off. He was soon sitting on his low form, with arms folded and legs crossed. By-and-by his little voice was sweetly singing the hymn—

'Jesus loves me, this I know,  
For the Bible tells me so.'

Then the little voice ceased suddenly, Chubby sat



'Lord, spare the child !'—Page 144



down on his form sick and giddy, complained of 'naughty pain in his head,' and began to cry.

That day an old man watched by the bedside of a fever-stricken grandchild.

'Grand-dad, you'll come to Jesus' heaven? He'll make you small 'grand-dad, small enough for "Suffer little children." Grand-dad, do come along with Chubby. Chubby's tired of waiting. Grand-dad, are you not ready?' were phrases which dropped from the child's lips in his delirium, in tones quite loud enough to reach the old man's ears.

The days passed on, full of anxious longing and of weary sadness. Grand-dad was ever at his post beside the bed. At length there came to the little fever-tossed patient the calm of sleep; then grand-dad stole away on tiptoe, to weep out in solitude his prayer, 'Lord, save the child.' It was New Year's morning, clear and frosty. Grand-dad, for the first time since that Sunday, when Chubby was carried home ill, left the house. His feet seemed to turn instinctively towards the village churchyard; and there, amongst the tombs, he mused and thought of Chubby. How often had the rippling laughter of the bonny boy come to grand-dad's ears as he sat in the porch, and Chubby played amongst the gravestones! To-day a child's grave, newly dug, caught grand-dad's eye and

filled his soul with a grief that gave utterance in a deep-breathed moan.

'Lord, spare the child,' again he cried. 'Lord, hast Thou sent him as an angel from his home in heaven to call a poor old tottering man like me away from thoughtlessness and sin, to Jesus on the cross? And now that Thou hast moved my heart with longing to know Thee, and to love Thee, art Thou calling back Thine angel? Must it be, Lord? Hast Thou the wish to have him safe housed in heaven? Then—though it break my heart, and leave me lonely—desolate—Lord help me, help me to mean it as I say it, Thy—will—be—done!'

The old man wept aloud, then rose and tottered home. He crept up cautiously to the room where Chubby lay. Perhaps he still slept on; perhaps he had flown away to heaven. It seemed hours, days, since grand-dad left his side. The silent room looked undisturbed as grand-dad slipped cautiously into his seat by the pillow, and bent lovingly over the motionless form of his little grandson. Another moment and two bright eyes were looking love into his face, and a sweet little voice said demurely, 'A Happy New Year to you, grand-dad.'

'Ay, ay, lad, the first New Year of a new-born life;'  
*and grand-dad sobbed for very joy.*

Yes, Chubby had awoke from his long sleep to live. His first question had been, 'Where is grand-dad?' the next, 'What's to-day? Where have I been to?'

When told in softest tones by his watching mother that this was 'New Year's Day,' he had repeated 'New Year's Day' and 'grand-dad,' and had fallen again to sleep, to rouse once more when grand-dad entered the room. Oh, what a bright New Year's Day that was in the home! How grand-dad paced the kitchen, praising God! He had given Chubby up to God, and God had given Chubby back again to him. Dear little Chubby was a long time in getting strong, but grand-dad and he were greater friends than ever. They sang their hymns together, they prayed their prayers together, and talked their texts together, until little Chubby felt 'just as if grand-dad had really grown little like himself, and that they were both Jesus' children who were suffered to come to Him, only grand-dad was an old child who wore spectacles, and he was a new child who could neither read nor write.'

Chubby never knew how his influence had helped to make grand-dad the happy man he was. It is not meant that children *should* know these little secrets. Each little child is the darling of somebody's heart; let that child be good and gentle, ever praying the

Lord Jesus to keep him pure and free from sin, and into his life, however humble or secluded, shall be gathered a sweet Christ-born, Christ-lived influence, and the heart that owns him 'darling' shall be taught by him.

When the warm spring time came, an old man and a little boy were often seen together hand in hand. Sometimes the old man would sit down on a stone by the wayside, while the laughing boy would bound along chasing a butterfly, or running races with his own shadow. And if you had happened to have passed that way, and had inquired of anybody living near, 'Who is that bright-faced lad?' they would have answered you, 'Why, that's Chubby, and that's his grand-dad; the old man sets great store by the lad; and no wonder, for the lad's been the saving of him. He first taught him to give up the drink, and then he led him to think of God and heaven.'

And it is that you might know how all this came about, without having to ask any more questions that I have to-day told you the story of 'CHUBBY'; OR, GRAND-DAD'S DARLING.

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